

The Palace In Nepalese Politics

*With Special Reference to the
Politics of 1951 to 1990*

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Dr. Sanu Bhai Dangol

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(With special reference to the politics of 1951 to 1990)

By

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NEPALESE POLITICS
(With special reference to the politics of 1951 to 1990)

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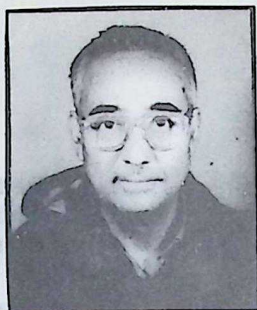
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Born on 6th January, 1943, Sanu Bhai Dangol is a well known writer of Kathmandu. He did doctorate from the Tribhuvan University of Nepal after being superannuated from the position of a Senior Officer at the royal palace of Nepal. He was awarded the prestigious degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.) on 10th February, 1998 for his dissertation on *The Palace in Nepalese Politics*. He had submitted this dissertation to the Tribhuvan University at Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. And the present volume is the revised version of the same dissertation in a book format.



Dr. Dangol had offered his services more than three decades under the two kings of Nepal-Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah and Birendra Bir Bikram Shah- at different capacities. He had also offered extra services as the first Member Secretary of Kathmandu Valley Cultural and Religious Sites Development Co-ordination Committee and as the first President of Dakshinkali Area Management Committee. The development works carried on at Dakshinkali Area and Pharping Bazar of Kathmandu district under his supervision are being credited as some of the excellent contributions. The inscription at the ceiling of the Pashupatinath temple displays how he had once been associated with the supervisory works of the Pashupati Area too. An honorary member of the world famous National Geographic Society of USA, Dr. Dangol had contributed a lot of articles on philosophy, religion and Nepalese politics at different magazines of Nepal. The books written by him on *Stray Sentiments*, *The Pashupatinath* and *Sotapanna or Flash of Enlightenment: Some Experiences* are being credited as excellent pieces of work in the sphere of philosophy and religion. Among them, *Sotapanna or Flash of Enlightenment: Some Experiences*, whose Nepali version also has been published, is being taken as one of the most sensational books of Nepal. He is also prized for writing "Philosophical Introduction" on two books of the Tribhuvan Award winner writer Dr. Jagdish Chandra Regmi.

DEDICATED

to

the sweet and sacred memory of:-

late parents **Deva Kumari** and **Ratna Man**,

late auntie **Bal Kumari**,

late sister **Kanchhi Maiya** and

late grandpa **Kalu**

PREFACE

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations are being used on most of the lengthy words that have occurred frequently in the text. The following are some of the words that have been abbreviated while preparing this work.

CPN	=	Communist Party of Nepal
CPN-UML	=	Communist Party of Nepal- Unified Marxist and Leninist
CWC	=	Congress Working Committee
HMG	=	His Majesty's Government
HMG/N	=	His Majesty's Government of Nepal
NCSO	=	Nepal Civil Servants' Organisation
PS	=	Palace Secretariat
RSS	=	Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh
UML	=	Unified Marxist Leninist
V.E.	=	Vikram Era

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CWC	=	Congress Working Committee
HMG	=	His Majesty's Government
HMGN	=	His Majesty's Government of Nepal
NCSC	=	Nepal Civil Service's Organisation
PS	=	Police Secretariat
RSS	=	Rastriya Swayamsewak Sangh
UMI	=	United Marxist Leninist
V.E.	=	Vikram Era

PREFACE

The palace in Nepalese politics is an area which had hardly been explored by any one. There have been numerous books on Nepalese politics written from the pens of outstanding writers both at home and abroad. Although they are the books on Nepalese politics, they also deal with palatial role in Nepalese politics. The reason behind it is that palace and politics are inter-related in Nepal and no one can speculate about their separation. Despite being the creditable pieces of work, the emphasis of these books is on diverse aspects of Nepalese politics rather than on palatial role. Moreover, these are the books written from the pens of the authors who do not have any inside view of the palace. The authors have not involved themselves with the palace people or royalties of Nepal. Nor had they participated in their hopes and despairs. That is why, the books written by them, although being credited as valuable pieces of work, have remained simply as the outsider's view on the palatial role. And, thus, there has been a great lacuna or gap in this sphere. It is with a view to fill up this lacuna or gap to a possible extent or to explore something on this virgin area, the author, after superannuating from the palace service, came forward to do doctorate on this theme. And he was awarded the prestigious degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) on 10th February 1998 for his dissertation on *The Palace in Nepalese Politic*. He had submitted this dissertation to the Tribhuvan University of Nepal at Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. And the present book is the revised version of the same dissertation in a new format.

The author had spent more than three decades in the palace service. Although to a little extent, he had been in touch or contact with late King Mahendra and present King Birendra along with certain royal family members too. Being himself a senior officer of the palace service, he had observed palace activities with his own eyes and participated in the hopes and despairs of the palace people and royalties too. Thus he knew something more about the inside view of the palatial role in Nepalese politics in comparison to these distinguished authors. Hence, he undertook the task of writing dissertation deeming himself as the right man or competent authority to deal on this subject-matter.

In the course of writing the dissertation, the author had gone through a lot of books written on Nepalese politics. In this connection, he found the books *Democratic Innovations in Nepal* by Bhuwan Lal Joshi and Leo E. Rose, *Politics in Nepal* by Anirudha Gupta, *The Political Development in Nepal* by R. S. Chauhan, *The Nepalese Dilemma* by

Tribhuvan Nath, *Nepali Politics: Prospects and Retrospects* by Rishkesh Shaha, *The King and His Constitution* by Narendra Goyal, *Political Ideology of King Mahendra* by Y.G. Krishnamurti, *Nepal aur Nepal Naresh* by Raj Nath Pandey, *Palace, People and Politics* by Bhola Chatterji, *Nepal's Politics of Referendum* by Lok Raj Baral, *India and Nepal: An Exercise in Open Diplomacy* by Shriman Narayan and others to be very informative and useful. They have helped the author to trace out certain new facts in regard to the palatial role in Nepalese politics. Despite such help, he found in them something missing and the missing point is the inside view of the palatial role in Nepalese politics. Among the so many books read by him, the author found some of them written in the format of eulogy or pynagric account. The books on *Political Ideology of King Mahendra* by Y.G. Krishnamurti, *Nepal aur Nepal Naresh* by Raj Nath Pandey, *A Study of Recent Nepalese Politics* and *Palace, People and Politics* by Bhola Chatterji may be taken as the examples in this direction. The books on *Political Ideology of King Mahendra* and *Nepal aur Nepal Naresh* may be traced as the pynagric account on the palace of Nepal. These books have extolled the palace to the height of the heaven and compared the royalties to divine beings. The books on *A Study of Recent Nepalese Politics* and *Palace, People and Politics*, on the other hand, may be taken as the hero-lauds or the eulogies composed by Bhola Chatterji to sing the glory of late Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala, the first elected Prime Minister of Nepal.

There have been certain other books which deal with the author's own role in Nepalese politics. Among such books, the book on *India and Nepal: An Exercise in Open Diplomacy* by Shriman Narayan may be taken as an outstanding one. In this book, the author has portrayed about the role which he himself had played for easing the tension that existed between India and Nepal on the then time. The author, Shriman Narayan had been an ambassador deployed by India to Nepal. During his tour of duty in Nepal, the relation between India and Nepal was in deteriorating situation. Nepal, at that time, was playing a very dominant role against India by utilising China as the triumph card. At such a juncture, he had been to Nepal as the Indian ambassador. By the exercise of open diplomacy, he won the confidence of the Nepalese people, of King Mahendra specially, and thus helped to tide over the problems existing between these two countries.

A study of these books reveals that these books have given emphasis more to Nepalese politics than to the inside view of palatial role. The present author has taken this fact into consideration. Hence he has tried to explore on this new area by laying emphasis more on the inside view of palatial role than on Nepalese politics. The other fact that he had taken into consideration while trying to write this book is to add new dimension in the existing source of knowledge. The author thinks himself successful in this mission although to a certain extent only. The new areas explored by him

specifically deals with "Palace Secretariat and Nepalese Politics" and "Religion, Palace and Nepalese Politics" while the entire thesis tries to add a new dimension in the existing source of knowledge. Now a few words on the thesis.

The palace is the focal point of Nepalese politics. Staying on this power-centre, the king, the queen, the royal family members, the courtiers and the clowns have given diverse shapes and dimensions to the national politics of Nepal. The role played by them, in the course of giving shapes and dimensions to the politics of Nepal, has sometimes proved to be of high esteem while, on other times, it seemed to descend and fall into the gutter of dismay and discredit. The role played by the palace in Nepalese politics after the dawn of democracy in 1951 is of special significance from multifarious point of view. It was at this time when the Nepalese people were provided some opportunity to experiment and experience the politics of their own. It was also the time when the political parties were introduced formally. Owing to all these factors, the institution known as the palace did not remain non-controversial as in the olden days. Because of Nepal's exposure to international sphere too, the palatial role in Nepalese politics became very much significant from diverse approaches. It is with a view to throw sufficient light in this sphere, the present author wrote a thesis on *The palace in Nepalese Politics* and submitted it to the Tribhuvan University at Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The Palace in Nepalese Politics is a thus a revised version of the very thesis which deals with the politics of three kings of Nepal--late King Tribhuvan, late King Mahendra and present King Birendra. The thesis covers the period of 45 years approximately, so to say, from 1951 to 1995.

The book is not a pynagric account or eulogy of any individual or institution. It holds no pre-occupation or obsession towards any personage or organisation. It has made allegiance only to facts. Somewhere it has brought to surface or focussed attention on certain facts which may not be pleasant to certain section of people or institutions. But the author was constrained to do so because he wanted that the significant facts of Nepalese politics might be delineated properly, accurately, authentically and objectively.

The book has not attempted to experiment any subsumed or pre-conceived theory model for case study. The author has not done so because such a theory model might lead him to collect the lopsided facts and thus may defeat the very purpose of objective study. The book is based mostly on the documents of events and on various kinds of decisions undertaken by the palace at different times. Hence it is not so much hypothetical in character. The author admits that he could not cross-verify certain facts incorporated in the book. He could not do so because the former and present staff of the palace took the book as a very sensational issue. Hence they did not wish to involve in it by giving explanation, comments or interviews. However the author has utilised his own long personal experience and observation in the

thesis which he had gathered up during his service period in the palace for more than three decades. And he has tried to utilise them very objectively. The present work is based both on primary and secondary data. The primary data include some of the interviews, observations, unpublished and published original documents. For the secondary data, books, journals, pamphlets, newspapers, research works are being used mostly.

While writing the book, the author had in his mind that he should make an exploration on the new areas of study and throw sufficient light in these areas. He thinks that he has been successful in this mission to a large extent while writing the chapters on "Religion, Palace and Nepalese Politics" and "Palace Secretariat and Nepalese Politics." The other objective set by him was that he should add a new dimension in the existing source of knowledge. And he thinks that he has been able to fulfil this objective in almost all the chapters of the book although to a certain extent only. The book is consisted of 300 pages approximately and is divided into six chapters and four sub- chapters.

The first chapter of the book entitled "Flashbacks of Nepalese History" traces a historical background of the theme from national perspective. In this chapter, the palatial role in Nepalese politics has been portrayed since the initial phase or dawn of Nepalese history. The important part of this chapter deals with the unification of Nepal by a small or petty state known as Gorkha. It was being done under the leadership of its king, King Prithvi Narayan Shah.

The second chapter deals with "Palace: Nature, Characteristics and Future". This chapter has made a critical study on the nature, characteristics and future of the palace. The study is being done from an international perspective.

The third chapter entitled "Palace and Nepalese Politics (1951 to 1995)" deals with the palatial role in Nepalese politics from 1951 to 1990. Being the longest chapter, the author has divided it into four sub-chapters.

The first sub-chapter entitled "Nepal as Satellite to India" deals with the politics of King Tribhuvan's period. King Tribhuvan had restored his throne with the help and co-operation of the Indian government.

The second sub-chapter entitled "Assertion of Place: Extinction of Democracy" deals with King Mahendra's political role of the first phase. It was at this period when the King consolidated palace authority by misleading one after another political leaders of Nepal.

The third sub-chapter entitled "Direct Rule under Panchayat System" deals with the second phase of King Mahendra's politics in Nepal. This chapter begins with the introduction of a political system known as Panchayat.

The last sub-chapter "Over-expansion of Palace Authority and Dissolution of Panchayat System" deals with the politics of King Birendra's period.

The fourth chapter of the book "Palace Secretariat and Nepalese politics" deals with the role of palace secretariat in Nepalese politics during

the period of three Kings-- late King Tribhuvan, late King Mahendra and present King Birendra. The important part of this chapter is that during King Birendra's period, the Palace Secretariat was elevated to a higher status. "Religion, Palace and Nepalese Politics" is the fifth chapter of this book. The theme dwelt upon in this chapter has not been explored by any other writers so comprehensively. The last chapter entitled "Conclusion" is being written in the format of aftermath of the book. This chapter deals with King Birendra's strategy to resurrect his lost power even after the re-establishment of democracy in 1990.

The "Aftermath" is the last part of the book which tries to evaluate King Birendra's role as constitutional monarch. The role played by the King within multi-party democracy's life-span of nine years seems very commendable. While writing the book, the author has attempted to become objective as far as possible. However, he does not pretend that the observation made and views expressed in the book are free from errors. The author will try to correct them as and when he can get more substantial and objective information in the time to come.

The responsibility for the facts stated, opinions expressed, observations made and conclusion reached in the work are entirely those of the author's and no other person or persons and institution or institutions are responsible for them.

Before concluding, the author expresses his gratitude to Dr. Panna Kaji Amatya, who as the guide, and to Dr. Ram Niwas Pandey and Dr. Tulasi Ram Vaidya, who as the internal experts and Dr. Dambar Narayan Yadav, Former Head of the Department of Political Science, Tribhuvan University and Dr. Parmanand, Professor of Delhi University, who as external examiners, have extended their valuable co-operation, suggestions, help and encouragement to the author in the course of preparing the book in a thesis format. The author admits that the book has come to such a nice shape only with the precious help accorded to him by these professors. Hence, he extends his thanks and appreciation to all of them from the very bottom of his heart for all kinds of co-operation extended to him. The other persons whom he owes his debt in this connection are his colleagues at Nepal Museological Association-- Dr. Jagdish Chandra Regmi and Pashupati Kumar Dwivedi-- and other university teachers as well as friends for their valuable encouragement and co-operation. His thanks are due to the staff of Central Library of Tribhuvan University, Bishnu Raj Ojha specially, for the help in selecting research materials. He also expresses his gratitude to his nephews-- Prakash Man Dangol, Maheshwar Raj Shrestha and Pranav Lal Singh for their co-operation in preparing this work in manuscript format.



FLASHBACKS OF NEPALESE History

No Tradition of Writing History

Nepal does not have a long tradition in writing authentic history. The facts traced out in the name of history in those days were found not as history but as some sort of mythology. In the words of Kirkpatrick "The ancient history of Nepaulians, like that of all other nations which affect to trace their origin beyond the date of authentic records, is clouded by mythologies."¹ The history written in this way is known as the *Vamsavalis* or chronicles which have tried to sketch the palaces as if heavens and the kings and monarchs as if superhuman or divine beings in lieu of ordinary mortals. In these chronicles, even the brutal acts of the then kings have been sanctified as virtues. Moreover they have tried to obscure the very facts of history in the womb of darkness. Some of the facts traced out by these texts are contradictory to one another too. To quote Pandit Naya Raj Pant, the famous Nepali historian, "Our history has not been written at all. Most of the books written in the name of history are of opposite characters, to say in other words, contradictory."² *Sardar* Rudra Raj Pandey too expresses a similar view with the words:

"It has not been made certain what should be taken as the initial period of Nepalese history. Truly speaking, the Nepalese history has not been written up till now. Whatsoever have been written, they are being painted with certain kind of unhistorical colour and some have been lacking historical outlook. It would not be an exaggeration to

¹ Colonel Kirkpatrick, *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, (New Delhi: Manjusi Publishing House, 1969), p. 255.

² *Suruchi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), September 15, 1993.

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say that most among them have been written with some particular objective."³

In spite of all these facts, it can be authentically said that the present Nepal, up to the first half of 18th century, was divided into numerous principalities. Even the Kathmandu valley, the then Nepal, was divided into three small kingdoms viz. Kantipur, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur. The other states outside the Kathmandu valley were known as *Baisi* and *Chaubisi* (twenty-two and twenty-four states) respectively.

Despite all these facts, it is to be admitted that Nepal has had a long chequered history of its own. It has been one of the most prominent cultural centres of the Hindu and Buddhist world since time immemorial. That is why, the prominent texts of the ancient India give so many references to this country. According to Narayan, former ambassador of India to Nepal,

"The earliest reference about Nepal is found in the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya which is supposed to have been written sometime in the third century B.C. There is also mention about Nepal in *Skanda Purana* where various centres of religious importance have been narrated. The *Nepal Mahatmya* incorporated in the *Skanda Purana* does not provide any definite idea about the location of different rivers within the two main systems of Gandaki and Kosi. While it lists the places of pilgrimage in the valley of Nepal, the Sanskrit treatise does not afford a clear description of topography. The famous Chinese traveller Hieun Tsang who toured these parts in the seventh century A.D. terms Nepal as 'Ni-po-lo' and describes it as a 'country situated at the distance of 1,400 or 1,500 li (280 to 300 miles) north-west of a ruined city.' According to him, Nepal was reached after crossing some mountains and entering a valley 'about 4,000 li (1,300 miles) in circuit and situated among the snowy mountains."⁴

Legends and Myths of Nepal

The *Vamshavalis* or chronicles are of the view that Nepal, the then Kathmandu Valley, was in the form of a lake in the beginning. It was Krishna or Manjusri who is credited to have made the valley fit for human habitation. In order to make it fit for human habitation, he had drained the water of this lake by cutting a deep gorge in a certain mountain. Geological evidences also endorse that the valley was indeed a lake at a certain time. The chronicles trace the *Gopalas* (the cowherds) and the *Mahispalas* (the buffalo-herders) as

³ Babu Ram Acharya, *Nepalko Samkshipta Britanta Vol.I*, (Kathmandu: Pramod Shamsher and Nir Bikram Pyasi, 2022V.E.), p. ka.

⁴ Shriman Narayan, *India and Nepal: An Exercise in Open Diplomacy*, (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books (P.) Ltd., 1971), pp. 19-20.

the earliest ruling dynasties of Nepal. Perhaps they were the dynasties which ruled the country at the time of pastoral stage.

The chronicles also trace the founder of Nepal as a sage or *muni* named Ne. As the country was sustained by the sage Ne, it got the name Nepal or the land sustained by Ne. And the successors of Ne were called *Gopalvamsis*, the descendants of the family of cowherds. It was the custom or tradition for the rulers of that time to trace their lineage as some of the worthy personages like sage or god. So the *Gopalvamsis* began to claim themselves as the descendants of the moon god or sage Ne. "The cowherd (*Gopala*) dynasty, claiming descent from the moon is called either the Lunar (*chandravamsi*) or Ne Muni dynasty. The chronicles used by Kirkpatrick and Wright name eight kings of this dynasty, whereas Padmagiri's chronicle mention only five."⁵

The Cowherd dynasty was followed by the rulers of the Buffalo-herder (*Mahispala*) dynasty known also as Abhiras or Ahirs. The seat of the government during the rule of the Cowherd and Buffalo-herder dynasties was in the village of Matatirtha, four miles south-west of Kathmandu. The Buffalo-herder dynasty was overthrown by the Kirata army of Yellong Kirata. Kirkpatrick's chronicle traces twenty-seven rulers of the Kirata dynasty whose rule covered a total period of one thousand five hundred and eighty one years and one month. The *Gopalraja Vamsavali*, the oldest chronicle, mentions only the thirty-two rulers of this dynasty. The names of the kings of this dynasty do not bear Sanskrit words. Yellong, Dushkhan, Ballancha, Joosha, Gontho, Khombo are certain names of this dynasty. "The Kiratas have a good deal more than the shadowy existence of their predecessors in the chronicle account, for they still exist. The Rais and Limbus of eastern Nepal are collectively known as Kiratas to this day."⁶

Rulers of Ancient Nepal

Nepal, in the form of Kathmandu valley, had been a land ruled by manifold tribes since time immemorial. Most of the tribes who ruled this country came from the south, i.e., India. No clear-cut information is available as regards the nomenclature of these rulers. "The Vamshavalis mention the rule of several dynasties--the Gopals, the Abhiras and the Kiratas--over a stretch of centuries. However no exact historical evidence has yet authenticated the rule of these legendary dynasties."⁷

The documented history of Nepal commences with the emergence of the Licchavi dynasty. The Licchavis were the first rulers in Nepal who

⁵ Rishikesh Shaha, *Ancient and Medieval Nepal*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1992), p.7.

⁶ *Ibid*, p.8.

⁷ *NEPAL: Destination with a Difference*, (Kathmandu: Department of Tourism, 1985), p.38.

have left the epigraphic evidences behind them as the legacy of historical documents. It is because of this legacy Landon very aptly echoes the words of Milton and says that "By this time, like one who had set on his way by night and travelled through a region of dreams, our history now arrives on the confines, where day-light and truth meets us with a clear dawn, representing to our view, though at far distance, true colours and shape."⁸

The Licchavis are believed to have migrated to Nepal from Vaisali, North India and Mandeva is the first Licchavi king of historical importance. The other important figures of this dynasty are Anshuvarman and Narendradeva. Among them, King Amshuvarman seems to open trade routes to Tibet. Hiuen Tsang, the famous Chinese traveller of 7th century A.D. had referred Amshuvarman as a man of multifarious qualities. The other Lichhavi King Narendradeva seems to initiate friendly relations with China while his successors with India by entering into matrimonial alliance with the Indian royal families. The Licchavi rule seems to have terminated with Raghavdeva in 880 A.D..

Thakuri Rulers of Medieval Era

The medieval era has its beginning after the termination of the Lichhavi rule in Nepal. The advent of this era is marked by the rule of a Thakuri dynasty—a dynasty which claimed itself to be of Rajput descent. The rule of this dynasty represents the transitional period extending over 300 years. Among so many kings enlisted in the chronicles, the most famous one was Gunakamdeva I. To quote Hasrat

"Of the long row of shadowy kings of the Thakuris, Gunakamdeva (942-1008 A.D.) is described to have founded the city of Kathmandu and his rule is said to have lasted 85 years,—a virtual impossibility. The valley of Nepal was then divided into two kingdoms, one ruled by Gunakamdeva, and the other by Narendradeva and Udayadeva jointly."⁹

The prominent feature of this period was the introduction of joint rule (*ubhayarajya*) of two or more kings. There had been certain kings like Gunakamdeva I, Lakshmikamdeva, Bhaskaradeva and others who put an end to the joint rule. In spite of all these attempts, the sole rule of a king could not stay for a long period. The joint rule was revived later on time and again. It was during the rule of these Thakuri kings or say towards the end of the eleventh century, Nanyadeva, a new ruler of Simroangarh in the Tarai area of Nepal, is said to have invaded Kathmandu.

⁸ Perceval Landon, *Nepal Vol.I.* (Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1976), p. 7.

⁹ Bikram Jit Hasrat (ed.), *History of Nepal*, (Punjab, India: Research Institute Book Agency, 1970), p. xxxii.

Last Rulers of Medieval Period

The Malla kings are taken in Nepal as the last rulers of medieval period. The first Malla king who ruled in Nepal was Ari Malla. This king, who ruled Nepal from 1200 A.D. to 1216 A.D., seems to assume the title simply of the king (*raja* or *nripa*) in the initial phase. The documents of the later period trace him as the king of kings, the lord and the most gracious one (*Rajadhiraja Parameshwara Parambhattarak*).

Following the death of Ari Malla and his successors, the throne of Nepal was succeeded by different novelties in the name of Mallas. Among them, Jayasimha Malla, Jaya Bhimdeva Malla and Ananta Malla are some of the well known names recorded by Nepalese history.

With Ananta Malla's death, the country remained without a recognised king for about five years, say, up to 1313. This led to the rise of two princes from the novelties of Tripura and Tirhut as the kings of Nepal. The names of these princes were Jayarudra Malla and Jagat Simha who died without leaving any male progeny as their successors. After Jagat Simha's death, Jayasthiti Malla, the husband of Jagat Simha's daughter Rajalladevi, rose to power and influenced the political destiny of the then Nepal for about three centuries.

During his rule, Jayasthiti Malla initiated a lot of reforms in the economic and social spheres of Nepal. The Sanskritisation of the Valley people and the new methods introduced by him in the field of land measurement and allocation were some of Jayasthiti Malla's reformatory measures. According to Slusser "Sthiti Malla is unquestionably one of the major figures of Nepalese history. Ruthless in his usurpation of the throne, he gave Nepal a stability it had not known for centuries."¹⁰

Jayasthiti Malla was a far-sighted ruler. In order to consolidate the Nepalese society, he adopted many long term measures. With the help of the brahmins of southern and northern India, he drew a code of social conduct and regulated it by giving due regard or concession to the local tradition. This trend was pursued later on by his second son Jayajyotir Malla and he too made a remarkable impact in the social structure of Nepal. To quote Landon

"Jayasthiti Malla and his most distinguished son Jyotir left a lasting impression upon the Nepalese nation: indeed, their influence upon the social organisation of Nepal remains today. They introduced for the first time a definite Brahmin predominance into the family of the country, and seem to have been capable and judicious sovereigns."¹¹

¹⁰ Mary Shephard Slusser, *Nepal Mandala Vol.I*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), p.59.

¹¹ Landon, f.n. No. 8, p. 38.

Yaksha Malla, who succeeded the throne of Nepal in 1428 A.D. after the death of his father, took full advantage of the political stability and prosperity for a long period. He extended the boundary of his country to a large extent. The chronicles trace that he conquered Mithila and extended his kingdom as far south as Gaya. He defeated the hill rajas, including the king of Gorkha in the west. His kingdom is said to have extended up to Bengal in the east and to the Ganges in the south and as far as Shekar Dzong, Tibet in the north.

Whether the achievements claimed by Yaksha Malla may be true or not, his career marked the zenith of power and glory. After his death, his three sons,—Raya Malla Ratna Malla and Rana Malla—ascended the throne of Nepal and ruled jointly as it had happened immediately after the death of their grand-father Jayasthiti Malla. Later on, the three brothers claimed authority on certain portion of the kingdom and thus the country was divided into three parts viz. Bhaktapur (Bhadgaun), Kantipur (Kathmandu) and Bhonta (Banepa) each ruled by Raya Malla, Ratna Malla and Rana Malla respectively. Later on Bhonta was merged within Bhaktapur while a new state, Lalitpur, emerged in the political scenario.

The division of the then Nepal into three petty kingdoms after the demise of Yaksha Malla weakened Nepal in regard to its position and strength. The daggers-drawn position perpetrated by the ruling family of these kingdoms further deteriorated the political situation of Nepal. It was a tragedy for the later Malla rulers that not a single king emerged in the political scenario to thread the divided kingdoms again into one single state. Certain prominent kings like Ratna Malla, Pratap Malla and Jaya Prakash Malla of Kantipur, and Bhupatindra Malla of Bhaktapur appeared in the political scenario of the then Nepal. Despite so many efforts undertaken by them to enhance the glory and prestige of their kingdoms, they did not have the quality to match themselves with their predecessors like Jayasthiti Malla and Yaksha Malla.

Taking advantage of the internecine feud between these three kingdoms, the kingdom of Gorkha made many attacks to secure the coveted throne of Nepal. Although the attacks proved failure in the beginning, fortune favoured the king of Gorkha, Prithvi Narayan Shah, in the year 1789 when he could annex these kingdoms within the Gorkha state.

Rise of Gorkha Kingdom

Prior to the unification of a greater Nepal, Nepal was divided into fifty-four petty states. Among them, Gorkha was the poorest, most hated and outcasted petty state nestling on the western side of the Kathmandu valley. It was a state founded by the prince of Lamjung, Drabya Shah, with the help of *Tagadharis* (sacred thread wearing community) and the dissatisfied people of that area. As it was a state conquered by his brother Drabya Shah, Narahari

Shah, the king of Lamjung, claimed the ownership of Gorkha. But Drabya Shah maintained a separate identity of Gorkha which Lamjung could not bear to witness. The result was the never ending clash between the two branches of the same family. Whenever Lamjung got an opportunity, she invaded Gorkha. This sort of hammering made the king and the people of Gorkha to stand on their own feet. This also led to a situation when the king and people of Gorkha were made to be united.

In the year 1609 A.D., a very matured king emerged in the political scenario of Gorkha state. After bringing necessary reforms on the economic and social conditions of the country, this king, Ram Shah, expanded the territory of Gorkha by conquering the northern and eastern areas. In this connection, the tribal chieftains of the present Dhading district were defeated one by one and, thus, Gorkha extended its territory up to the Trisuli river. In this way, he laid the foundation of greater Gorkha, i.e., greater Nepal.

Despite so many reforms brought forth by Ram Shah, the economic condition of Gorkha did not improve much. The whole country was a rugged mountainous region without any plain land and mineral resources. This sort of economic condition constrained the king and the people of Gorkha to face severe hardship in life. It was because of this economic condition, the house of Gorkha was very much insulted. Even Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founder of greater Nepal, underwent humiliation even at the houses of his maternal uncle at Palpa and of his wife at Makwanpur. It was because of this reason, the king and the people of Gorkha were determined to undertake any risk to bring suitable changes in their economic condition. That is why, Prithvi Narayan Shah pursued the policy of 'do or die' when he took the leadership of Gorkha. And this policy turned to be a nucleus for the expansion of Gorkha kingdom later on known as greater Nepal.

Expansion of Gorkha Kingdom

After ascending to the throne of Gorkha, Prithvi Narayan Shah pursued the policy of expanding Gorkha kingdom. In the year 1743 A.D., he led an attack upon Nuwakot, one of the prominent forts of Kantipur. The attack proved failure because of the strong defensive measure organised by Jayant Rana, a veteran warrior from Kantipur. Hence the king launched another attack on 1744 A.D. and brought Nuwakot under his control. He got success in the war because of the well preparation arranged for war and also because the war was launched at a time when Jayant Rana was out of station. As Jayant Rana came to know of this news, he rushed to Belkot, another important fort of Kantipur, to give a battle to Gorkha. At this time, Prithvi Narayan Shah sent a letter to Jayant Rana asking him to surrender because of his long affiliation with Gorkha. In the letter, Prithvi Narayan Shah had assured Jayant Rana of restoring him to his old position in the Gorkha palace. Jayant Rana was sincere to his master Jaya Prakash Malla. So he made the

reply that as he had been in the service of Jaya Prakash Malla, it would be a treachery on his part to betray his master. So he expressed his readiness to meet the Gorkha king in the battlefield. In this way, he refused to surrender before Gorkha. In the battle of Belkot, which was launched within a few days, Jayant Rana was defeated and imprisoned and was brought before Prithvi Narayan Shah. Prithvi Narayan Shah, out of anger, made Jayant Rana to be flayed alive in the presence of all the people at Nuwakot including the Gorkhalis.¹²

Boost up much by this success, Prithvi Narayan Shah started conquering the hill forts lying at the peripheral areas of Kantipur. In this connection, Naladum, Dolakha, Mahadevpokhari, Sankhu, Changu, Tistung, Palung, Chitlang etc. were brought under Gorkha's control. In the year 1757, he made an attack on Kirtipur, the important fortified city of the Kathmandu valley. At this time, the three kingdoms of the valley joined their hands to make a strong resistance. In the sanguine battle fought at Kirtipur, the Gorkha troops were completely routed. Kalu Pande, the most prominent commander of Gorkha, also was killed in the battle. Prithvi Narayan Shah also was about to be given a fatal blow by a Malla soldier. At this time, another Malla soldier checked him reminding the traditional belief that a king should not be killed by a soldier. Prithvi Narayan Shah was spared of his life in this way. As regards the result of this battle, the words of Vaidya are:-

"The first battle of Kirtipur was too costly to the Gorkhalis. As already mentioned the death of Kalu Pande was an irrecoverable loss to Prithvinarayan Shah. The mastermind of Gorkha was lost. Prithvinarayan Shah narrowly escaped the death. It was a determined resistance from the side of the Mallas. The battle had shown a proof of the strength of the Mallas when united. Moreover had Jaya Prakash pursued the Gorkhalis, the Gorkhalis would have to retreat to Gorkha. But since the Mallas were destined to have their fall in near future, they did not bother of pursuing the defeated."¹³

After the defeat, Prithvi Narayan Shah remained silent for about two years. Later on, he pursued the policy of economic blockade to Kathmandu valley. Cutting off all the supply routes of the valley, he prohibited traders in bringing necessary materials to the valley. "Every man, woman, or child who brought in food, salt or cotton was incontinently hanged and their bodies left to rot beside the path."¹⁴

Similarly he played a tricky game to bring factions in the palace of Kantipur by sending fake letters to the courtiers of Kantipur. Likewise, he

¹² T.R. Vaidya, *Advanced History of Nepal (1737-1839)*, (New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1994), p.43.

¹³ Ibid, p. 43.

¹⁴ Landon, f.n. No. 8, p. 60.

conquered Makwanpur and Tanhaun in 1764 by playing tricks and betrayal. As regards the betrayal to Trivikram Sen, the king of Tanahaun, the words of Vaidya are:-

"Prithvinarayan Shah approached Trivikram Sena through Gaureswor Pandit with the assurance that the Gorkha king wanted to have a talk with the king of Tanahaun. But when both the kings met at a said spot and the conversation was going on, the Gorkhalis arrested Trivikrama Sena in a treacherous way. The Gorkhalis version of the imprisonment was that the Tanahaun king had insulted a concubine of Prithvinarayan Shah who was on her way to Varanasi having suffered from tuberculosis. Even if it was a fact the way Trivikrama Sen was arrested proves that Prithvinarayan Shah could be treacherous to any extent to achieve his goal. It was quite deceptive and treachery from the part of Prithvinarayan Shah, who could have waged war and taken the king of Tanahaun as a prisoner after defeating him. Poor Gaureswar Pandit, out of fury and shock, went to Varanasi to pass his remaining part of life."¹⁵

Later on Prithvi Narayan Shah conquered the villages of Panauti, Chaukot, Dhulikhel, Banepa, Khadpu, Sanga, Nala, Naikot, Pharping, Bhisankhu, Chobhar, Panga etc.. After conquering these villages, he made a second attack on Kirtipur in 1764. At this time, Prithvi Narayan Shah's brother, Surapratap Shah's eye was shot by an arrow. This event made the Gorkha army to flee from the battlefield. In this way, the second battle of Kirtipur also proved failure for the Gorkha kingdom.

After this failure, the Gorkha troops tightened their blockade against Kirtipur for a long period. Thus the people of Kirtipur were made to face hardship even for their daily life. None of the Malla kings of the Kathmandu valley came to rescue them. At this time, Prithvi Narayan Shah gave an assurance that if Kirtipur were surrendered, the inhabitants there would go unscathed. Contrary to these words, Prithvi Narayan Shah gave "orders that the lips and noses of all males of twelve and over be cut off and the name of the town be changed to Naskatipur –the city of Cut Noses."¹⁶ The noses cut off thus "weighed seventeen dharnis (about 80 lbs) and the people thus mutilated were 865 of those who had fought valiantly and kept the Gorkhalis out of the town."¹⁷

As regards the chopping of noses and lips of the people of Kirtipur, not merely the foreign writers but the palace poets of Nepal equally have given eulogic or panegyric accounts. Tracing the accounts of some such

¹⁵ Vaidya, f.n. No. 12, p.50.

¹⁶ Jeremy Bernstein, *The Wildest Dream of Kew*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), p. 26.

¹⁷ Danial Wright, *History of Nepal*, (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1990), p. 176.

poets, Vaidya makes a comment:-

"Lalitballabh, the Gorkhali poet, had also written in his eulogic account of Prithvinarayan Shah that the noses and lips of the people of Kirtipur were chopped off and thus they were deformed. Sundarananda, another poet, who wrote the panegyric account of King Girvanyuddha and Rajendra, regent Tripurasundari and Bhimsena Thapa also wrote that when Surpratap Shah heard the people of Kirtipur calling him 'a blind man' he lost his temper. With the permission of Prithvinarayan Shah the noses and lips of the people were cut off."¹⁸

After bringing Kirtipur under control, Prithvi Narayan Shah completed his campaign against the then Nepal in 1769 by occupying the three kingdoms,-- Kantipur, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur. Thus he laid down the foundation of greater Nepal, to say in other words "greater Gorkha."¹⁹ But the foundation was laid down only by perpetrating unwholesome activities like brutality, cruelty, deception and betrayal. But out of these unwholesome activities came out Nepal's unification process too as the silver linings in the dark clouds.

The history of modern Nepal commences with Prithvi Narayan Shah's conquest of the three kingdoms of the Kathmandu valley. After conquering these three kingdoms too, the king did not remain silent. He made Kantipur the capital of greater Nepal and engaged again in the task of expanding the kingdom. Turning his eyes towards the east "the Sena kingdom of Chaudandi was acquired by 1775 and Vijayanagar (pur) another Sena kingdom was annexed shortly after. The kingdom of Nepal which he founded extended to Marsyangdi river in the east and comprised more than one third of the present territory of the kingdom of Nepal."²⁰ In the year 1775 A.D. when Prithvi Narayan Shah was making an extensive programme to conquer the Chaubisi (24 states), he unfortunately suffered from illness. After a few days, he died at Devighat in Nuwakot.

Before his death, Prithvi Narayan Shah had annexed almost all of today's eastern Nepal including the districts of Makwanpur, Rautahat and Bara Parsa to the south of the Kathmandu valley. The task of expanding the kingdom to the west was completed by his daughter-in-law and second son-- Rajendra Laxmi and Bahadur Shah--respectively during their regency to his grand son Rana Bahadur Shah. It was during their regency that the *Baisi* and *Chaubisi* (the twenty-two and twenty-four principalities) provincial states were annexed into the kingdom of Nepal. Nepal's attempt of expansion was

¹⁸ Vaidya, f.n. No. 12, p. 53.

¹⁹ T. R. Vaidya, *Prithvinarayan Shah: The Founder of Modern Nepal*; (New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1993), p. 169.

²⁰ *Nepal*...f.n. No. 7, p. 40.

halted in 1816 when she had been forced to sign the treaty of Sugauli with British East India Company. This treaty was signed during King Girvan Yuddha Bikram Shah's rule when Bhimsen Thapa was wielding the sole authority of the nation as chief (prime) minister or mukhtiyar. To echo the words of Narayan

"Under this treaty Nepal lost her positions in Sikkim, Kumaun and Garhwal. To the south Nepal was compelled to cede western Terai to the kingdom of Oudh and eastern Terai to the British, a portion of which was, however, returned to her in the same year. Thus, by 1816, the political boundaries of modern Nepal was finally settled which, with minor adjustments and alterations, have remained intact to the present day."²¹

Shah Kings of Modern Nepal

The Shah king who laid the foundation of modern Nepal was Prithvi Narayan Shah. It was this king who threaded the scattered and disintegrated principalities of the then period into a greater kingdom. In order to create such a kingdom, he spent almost all his life in warfare. As he was aware of the hard realities of life, he left no stone unturned to accomplish his mission. He pursued no stipulated procedures or rules while engaging in warfare. For him it was the end that always justified the means. In the words of M. Levi "So far as he was concerned religion, priests, the gods themselves were nothing but instruments put at his service for the achievement of the empire he coveted."²²

After conquering the three kingdoms of the Kathmandu valley, he established a very ruthless and despotic rule. "Immediately after coming to power he had mercilessly dealt with the erstwhile rulers of the land--the Newars-- killing every person of distinction connected with the late Newar dynasty."²³ He retained himself as an absolute ruler until his death in 1775 A.D.. He administered the country with a small coterie of persons and the army. He permitted no one to interfere or encroach upon his authority. He did not spare even his own brothers in this connection. That is why, the three brothers,--Kirtimahoddan Shah, Dalmardan Shah and Surapratap Shah,-- who were too ambitious and coveted the share of the conquered area fled away hither and thither for their safety and later on turned out to be dissidents.

The other policy adhered by him strictly was to isolate Nepal from external influences. In his view, 'Nepal was like a yam between two huge stones.' He was much more afraid with the British East India Company which

²¹ Narayan, f.n. No. 4, p. 26.

²² Landon, f.n. No. 8, p. 58.

²³ R.S. Chauhan, *The Political Development in Nepal 1950-70*, (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1971), p. 11.

had then brought the giant neighbour India under its subjugation. Hence in order to check the influence of this company "He drove out the Capuchin missionaries, who had, after their expulsion from Tibet, taken up their abode in the Valley. He shut his passes at all European mercandise..."²⁴

After Prithvi Narayan Shah's death, no Shah king appeared in the then Nepal who could rule the country very strongly. His son and successor Pratap Singh Shah succumbed to luxurious life of the court and spent his days mostly in literature, drama and *tantra* practice. Within a very short span of rule, he died in 1777 leaving his minor son Rana Bahadur Shah. The death of Pratap Singh Shah was followed on by the enthronement of three minor kings,-- Rana Bahadur Shah, Girvan Yuddha Bikram Shah and Rajendra Bikram Shah. The enthronement of these minor kings in a row and the feeble and imbecile character possessed by some of them gave rise to a situation where the royal family members and the courtiers divided themselves into different political groups and contested one another for power. Thus the political situation of Nepal worsened day by day. The result was that the Shah kings of Nepal were constrained to lose their *defacto* rule during the prime ministership of Bhimsen Thapa and the Ranas.

The first power clash appeared in Nepalese court immediately after the death of Prithvi Narayan Shah. Later during the reign of minor King Rana Bahadur Shah, his mother and uncle--Rajendra Laxmi and Bahadur Shah --tussled each other for regency. In the power tussle, the first attempt was launched by Bahadur Shah by imprisoning Queen Mother Rajendra Laxmi in the palace. While being imprisoned she was given the charge of having illicit relation with a courtier Sarbajit Rana. A chronology mentions that Sarbajit Rana was killed afterwards.

The queen mother was provided with no opportunity to face trial by ordeal as prevalent in those days. Later on, when the queen mother was released and proved innocent too, she initiated stern action against the followers of Bahadur Shah. As regards this stern action, the words of Bajracharya are:-

"According to a chronicle both Dhana Khawas and Balbhadra Khawas were crushed to death by an elephant; Gaurikant and Kirti Singh were impaled to death. Daljit Shah and Shivanarayan Khatri were both exiled. Bahadur Shah remained under house arrest and Bamsaraj Pandey was executed in the Bhandarkhal."²⁵

The death of Rajendra Laxmi on 1785 A.D. paved way for Bahadur Shah to come to power again. After coming to power as the regent, he also took measures in brushing away his opponents from the court. In this

²⁴ Landon, f.n. No. 8, pp. 66-67.

²⁵ Bhadra Ratna Bajracharya, *Bahadur Shah: The Regent of Nepal (1785-1794 A.D.)*, (New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1992), p. 24.

connection Swarup Simha Karki was put to death. Balbhadra Shah and many other officers were dismissed. The opponents were crushed in this way. But the power of Bahadur Shah did not last long. Rana Bahadur Shah asserted his authority as the king of Nepal after his coming of age. In the initial phase, Bahadur Shah was cornered from power. Later on when he opposed the king's marriage with a Brahmin widow, Kantiwati, he was imprisoned on the pretext of failure in submitting the account of his regency period. He was tortured to death by sprinkling the boiling oil on him. To quote Bajracharya

"Rana Bahadur Shah is said to have ordered the sprinkle of hot oil over the naked body of Bahadur Shah till he was almost burnt. He also humiliated his aunt (Bahadur Shah's wife) publicly on charge that she attempted to poison his mother. It made Bahadur Shah mentally shocked. These physical and mental tortures proved so horrible that Bahadur Shah could not regain his health."²⁶

A few years afterwards, Kantiwati, the Brahmin widow, died in 1799 giving birth to a son, Girvan Yuddha Bikram Shah. In order to console this queen before her death, King Rana Bahadur Shah abandoned his own throne and coronated the child of Kantiwati. The death of this queen made Rana Bahadur bear an unbearable shock. The shock was so severe that the ex-king Rana Bahadur Shah turned to be an insane person and began to perpetrate whimsical activities. As a result, a power tussle was ensued between this ex-king and the courtiers ruling in the name of Girvan Yuddha Bikram Shah. As the situation began to worsen and was about to bring civil war, Rana Bahadur Shah fled to Varanasi, India accompanied by his most trusted followers like Bhimsen Thapa and Dalmanjan Pandey.

Rana Bahadur Shah did not remain silent even while he was in Varanasi. In order to secure his lost power, he approached to the East India Company in India for help. The Governor General of Bengal, Lord Welleseley, who also presided over the company, did not listen him because he was finding himself difficult with other forces in India. The communications of Rana Bahadur Shah reveal that he was on the errand to recover his throne with the help of British power. If his plan was accepted by Lord Welleseley, the history of Nepal would have taken a very different course.

As Rana Bahadur Shah did not find any help from the East India Company in India, he returned back to Kathmandu in 1804. Damodar Pandey, the then *Mulkaji* (prime minister), accompanied by an army, reached Thankot to stop and confine Rana Bahadur Shah. The plan of Damodar Pandey did not succeed because the army took to the side of the ex-king. The result was that Damodar Pandey and his followers were arrested and later on killed.

With the return of Rana Bahadur Shah, the Nepalese politics drifted once again towards chaos and confusion. Taking advantage of this situation, Bhimsen Thapa eliminated all his rivals from the court of Nepal. And this was done at the cost of even the ex-king's life. As regards Bhimsen Thapa's strategy, Vaidya makes a commentary like this:-

"...Rana Bahadur Shah's murder was an outcome of the conspirational politics of Nepal. It had a long term effect in the history of Nepal. The power was now shifted from the royal family to a courtier who became supreme and ruled as *de facto* for thirty one years. Bhimsena Thapa got an opportunity to fish in a troubled water and emerged as the ruler of Nepal. He was the outcome of the event. Expert as he was to exploit the existing situation he left no stone unturned to consolidate his power. Bidur Shahi, a dismissed prince, was also dragged and put to death. Prithvipal Sena who was in confinement was also charged of trying to become the king of Nepal and was killed in a cold blooded way. Rajrajeshwari along with the maid servants were burnt to death in the name of Sati. Not only that the family members of Sher Bahadur Shahi, Bidur Shahi and others were reduced to Chandal and obliged to reside with Chandals. The punishment meted out to all these persons reveal how merciless Bhimsena Thapa was. Even the cremation was not permitted. This incident proved the existence of brutality of medieval world in Nepal. The main thing was on the pretext of the murder of the ex-king, all the big shots who could challenge Bhimsena Thapa were murdered in the most cold blooded manner. It was more cold blooded than the Kot Massacre of 1846 A.D., because in the latter episode at least the Chautarias and others fought bravely with their weapons for their defence whereas in this case those people who were sleeping in the dead of night were dragged and put to death one by one. Even the maid servants were not spared. It is one of the most tragic episodes in the history of Nepal."²⁷

After Rana Bahadur Shah's murder, his youngest wife, Lalit Tripura Sundari, assumed the position of regency for the minor kings,-- Girvan Yuddha Bikram Shah and Rajendra Bikram Shah. During her regency, Bhimsen Thapa, blessed by the *Rajmata* (queen mother), enjoyed enormous power as the *mukhtiyar*. From the year 1807 to 1837, say, for about thirty one years, he ruled the country as the sole authority of Nepalese politics. At that time, say, before the death of the *Rajmata*, the position of kings in Nepal was just like that of a *de jure* head. The kings were not permitted to go outside the palace without the permission of the *Mukhtiyar*. As regards the

²⁷ Vaidya, f.n. No. 12, p. 168.

low position of King Rajendra Bikram Shah, the impression left by the then British resident, Brian Hodgson, runs as:-

"Last year, the Raja desired to make an excursion into the lower hills but was prevented. Of power, he has not a particle, nor seems to wish it. Of patronage, he was not a fraction, and his nature galled it. This as well as being sentinelled all round by Bhimsen's creatures even within his own abode, and being debarred from almost all liberty of locomotion and of intercourse with the sirdars and gentry of the country. The Raja has been purposively so trained as to possess little energy of body and mind."²⁸

In spite of such a strategy, Bhimsen Thapa is prized as the topmost political figure in the Nepalese history. It was because of the vigorous steps undertaken by him in the consolidation, development and reform works of the country. Because of the laudable steps undertaken by him, the people got relief from war taxation. Peace as well as happiness began to prevail in the country. Some of the reformatory measures undertaken by him are:- (a) the revenue system of the land was reformed; (b) new towns were developed; (c) attempts were made to bring uniformity in the implementation of law throughout the length and breadth of the country; (d) irrigational canals were reconstructed and repaired etc.. During Bhimsen Thapa's *Mukhtiyarship*, no intrigues occurred in the Nepalese court. It was because of this fact even Jang bahadur was compelled to estimate:- "Among we Viziers, Bhimsena Thapa was the greatest vizier."²⁹

With the death of *Rajmata* Lalit Tripura Sundari in 1832, the star of Bhimsen Thapa began to wane. King Rajendra Bikram Shah was already grown up. The king wanted that he should assert his authority as the king of Nepal. But he found Bhimsen Thapa as the main hurdle in the accomplishment of his mission. So he wanted that Bhimsen Thapa be ousted from his position. The Senior Queen Samrajya Laxmi Devi, supported by Damodar Pandey's son Rana Jang, added extra fuel to this fire. She began to poison the ears of the king against Bhimsen Thapa. In the year 1837, he was made to be dismissed from his position on the charge of poisoning a baby prince. Although Bhimsen Thapa was labelled the charge, he was not found guilty and so he was acquitted and set free. This event did not satisfy the senior queen as well as Rana Jang Pandey. They revived the old case of poisoning the baby prince again in 1839 when Puskar Shah was the *Mukhtiyar*. At this time, the strategy proved effective. Poor Bhimsen Thapa was taken to prison in chains. In order to harass him to utter disappointment,

²⁸ Rishikesh Shaha, *Essays in the Practice of Government in Nepal*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1982), p. 39.

²⁹ Chittaranjan Nepali, *General Bhimsen Thapa Ra Tatkalin Nepal*, (Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2035 V.E.), p. 135.

the group circulated a rumour that his wife Bhakti Kumari would be compelled to walk naked in the streets of Kathmandu at broad daylight. Bhimsen Thapa was shocked to hear of this rumour. He struck his throat with a *khukuri* and died nine days afterwards. Even after his death, "His corpse was refused funeral rites but dismembered and exposed about the city, after which the mangled remains were thrown away on the riverside, where the dogs and vultures dared further heed them."³⁰ Questioning on the death of Bhimsen Thapa, Vaidya makes a very sharp comment:-

"To think of the then court politics it is quite possible that the minister was fatally injured by the hired persons and the rumour of Bhimsen's committing suicide, as mentioned above, was spread. Further research on the subject will reveal the fact."³¹

The conspirational politics of the palace, which started with King Rajendra Bikram Shah's coming of age, did not subside even after the expulsion and suicide of Bhimsen Thapa. The expulsion and suicide of Bhimsen Thapa, no doubt, restored the authority to the king to rule the country as a *de facto* ruler. But due to his weak and intriguing disposition, he proved himself to be an incapable monarch in exercising the authority effectively. In the initial phase, the Senior Queen Samrajya Laxmi Devi exerted her influence in the court of Nepal. Under her influence, Rana Jang Pandey became the *Mukhtiyar* of Nepal. At this time, "the policy of nibbling aggressiveness along the southern border with British India began again, culminating in the seizure of the district of Ramnagar."³² The East India Company took it seriously and threatened Nepal for a war. As a result, Rana Jang Pandey was dismissed. The senior queen left Nepal for Benares in order to practise austerities but fell a victim to malaria of the Tarai and died.

The death of the senior queen made Crown Prince Surendra Bikram Shah to take the place of his mother. But the king was compelled to handover his authority to the junior queen because of the unbridled licence and oppression perpetrated by the crown prince to the people. The Junior Queen Rajya Laxmi Devi also known as Laxmi Devi took advantage out of the situation. She tried to install his own son Prince Ranendra as the successor to the throne of Nepal in lieu of Crown Prince Surendra. In this plan and programme, she found the Pandey and Chautaria families as the prominent hurdles. So she prevailed upon the king and invited Mathvar Singh Thapa from his exile in India. Then she made him the Minister cum Commander-in-Chief of Nepal on December 1843.

³⁰ Landon, f.n. No. 8, p. 91.

³¹ Vaidya, f.n. No. 12, p. 189.

³² Adrien Sever, *Nepal Under the Ranas*, (New Delhi: Oxford Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1993), p. 39.

Mathvar Singh too did not help the queen in installing her son Ranendra as the successor to the throne of Nepal. Moreover, he tried to help Crown Prince Surendra by persuading the king to abdicate his throne in favour of the crown prince. This attempt of Mathvar Singh made both the king and the queen his enemies for which he was assassinated in 1845 by his own nephew Jang Bahadur. After Mathvar Singh's assassination, the queen tried to install her paramour Gagan Singh Bhandari as the *Mukhtiyar* of Nepal. The king objected this proposal because he took this proposal as a prelude to death not only of his own but also of his son Crown Prince Surendra. The result was that after four months, a coalition ministry was formed under Fateh Jang Shah consisting of Abhiman Singh Basnyat, Gagan Singh Bhandari and Jang Bahadur as well. As the king could not tolerate the stronghold of Gagan Singh Bhandari in the court of Nepal, he made a plan to murder him. Accordingly, on 14th September, 1846, he was shot dead by a hired assassin.

The murder of Gagan Singh threw Queen Rajya Laxmi on the pit of overwhelming sorrow. Wailing bitterly, she promised to avenge the murderer with death penalty. So she summoned all the chief officers of the civil and army at the Kot (fort) near the Hanumandhokha Palace. Jang Bahadur, accompanied by his six brothers and three regiments, arrived first. The other officers, excepting Fateh Jang Shah, also arrived at time but mostly unarmed. The queen suspected *Kapardar* Bir Kirshore (Gora) Pandey as the murderer. So she ordered General Abhiman Singh Basnyat to put him in fetters and behead him. General Basnyat fettered Pandey but did not behead him as had been commanded. On the otherhand, he began to refer this case to King Rajendra. King Rajendra fled from the scene in order to avoid investigation. Jang Bahadur, when he met Chautariya Fateh Jang Shah and his party coming to Kot, suggested that if the plenipotentiary queen were to be pacified, both *Kapardar* Bir Kishore (Gora) Pandey and General Abhiman Rana had to be executed in compliance with her command. Fateh Jang Shah did not approve the plan. He went straight to General Basnyat and told him everything which he heard from Jang Bahadur.

In a fit of rage, Queen Rajya Laxmi Devi summoned all the high officials assembled at Kot and asked them to name the murderer of Gagan Singh. When she was about to attack Bir Kishore Pandey with sword, Fateh Jang Shah pleaded not to punish him without trial. In accordance with him, General Abhiman Singh was right while he refused to carry on the queen's order. The queen mounted the staircase with rage. At that time, the rifle shot rent the air. Fateh Jang Shah and *Kaji* Dalmanjan Gora Pandey dropped dead while General Abhiman Singh rushed to the main gate to invoke help from the soldiers under his own command. While on the way, he was cut off into two by Krishna Bahadur Kunwar, one of the brothers of Jang Bahadur.

With the murder of these three prominent figures, a battle broke out among the high officials assembled at the Kot. Almost all nobility gathered there were unaware of the situation and therefore were not prepared to meet the situation. Meanwhile Jang Bahadur was ready for any eventuality with his regiments at hand. In the fierce attack that preceded the shooting of *Mukhtiyar* Fateh Jang Shah, the other members of the leading families were shot or cut down by Jang Bahadur's crack personal guards armed with double barrel guns. Jang Bahadur's son Padma Jang records fifty-five names of the prominent officers who were slain on this occasion. Even before this strategic murder known as 'Kot Massacre' was over, the queen conferred on Jang Bahadur the position of *Mukhtiyar* as well as Commander-in-Chief of the entire Nepalese army. She did it in recognition of the service Jang Bahadur had rendered in saving her life and in avenging the murder of Gagan Singh Bhandari.

After holding the position of *Mukhtiyar*, Jang Bahadur consolidated his authority by allocating all the strategic posts of civil and military officers to his brothers and relatives. At the same time, the family of the old nobilities were made to go for exile. The British border officials recorded the number of such people or refugees to be six thousand. When he was sure of his full authority, he began to raise voice against the queen's plot for putting Crown Prince Surendra and Prince Upendra to death. In a letter sent to the queen, he wrote that "My duty to the state bids me to submit, that should Your Majesty ever repeat this order, you shall be prosecuted for attempt at murder by the law of the land."³³

Queen Rajya Laxmi Devi was not a person to take anyone's challenge so lightly. She hatched a new plot for assassinating Jang Bahadur. On 31st October, 1846, Jang Bahadur was summoned at Bhandarkhal palace where Captain Vazir Singh, son of late Gagan Singh, accompanied by 50 soldiers was waiting for the assassination. Jang Bahadur got this information beforehand from Vijaya Raj Pandey, a minor religious functionary of the palace chapel. So Jang Bahadur set out for Bhandarkhal accompanied by his brothers and six companies of soldiers. Moving inside the Bhandarkhal palace, he killed almost all the plotters. The Bhandarkhal massacre decimated almost all the Basnyat family, i.e., members of the old Gorkha nobility and staunch supporters of the queen. After this incident, the queen and her two sons,--Prince Ranendra and Prince Birendra,--were taken into custody. On 22nd November, 1846, the queen and her two sons, accompanied by King Rajendra, voluntarily left Nepal for Benares.

A few months afterwards the self-imposed exile, King Rajendra sought to restore his power by plotting against Jang Bahadur's life. In this connection, Sanak Singh, one of the plotters, was killed by the troops of Jang

³³ Shah, f.n. No. 28, p. 64.

Bahadur in Kathmandu. Another plot hatched in complicity with Sher Mardan and Dambar Singh was also foiled.

Even after the failure of these plots, King Rajendra made another attempt to restore his power by assembling a small force of his own at the place called Alau near Birjung in Nepal. As Jang Bahadur had kept a strict watch over the king's activities from the beginning, he found no trouble in dealing with the king's men. King Rajendra himself was taken as prisoner. But prior to this event, or say, on 12th May, 1847, Jang Bahadur proclaimed Crown Prince Surendra as the king of Nepal. He made such proclamation in order to forestall hostile activities of King Rajendra. In 1856, he received the red seal (*lal mohar*) from King Surendra which made him the *Maharaja* of two districts--Kaski and Lamjung-- and also guaranteed hereditary Maharajaship and Prime Ministership to his family.

With this red seal, the hereditary Rana Prime Ministers were vested the *de facto* authority of the entire nation. The Shah kings of Nepal were deprived of all the political powers. They were made to remain within the palace premises although they had been honoured with the title of *Maharajadhiraja* (king of kings). This trend continued to exist in Nepal for about a century until Surendra Bikram Shah's great grand-son King Tribhuvan appeared in the scene to dismantle such a system in 1950.

Rana Rule in Nepal

Jang Bahadur:- The political scenario of Nepal in the forties of nineteenth century was at its lowest ebb. An atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity was prevailing in the court life of the nation. If that atmosphere was to continue a few years more, it was sure, the country would have a different history. At such a critical juncture, a new figure appeared in the political arena of Nepal who could bring the atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity under control. And that figure was Jang Bahadur, one of the most dominant Prime Ministers of Nepal. Jang Bahadur was an extra-ordinary person who started his career from the humble beginning and raised it up to the level of highest executive head of Nepal. To elevate himself to that position, he pursued almost all sorts of strategy. Assassinating his own maternal uncle Mathbar Singh, perpetrating the ill-reputed Kot massacre, and deposing King Rajendra from the throne are some of the extra-ordinary feats which helped him to elevate to that position. It was because of these reasons, the Nepalese history recollects this Prime Minister not merely for the extra-ordinary feats, adventurous life and opportunistic role but equally for the genius in creating the position of hereditary Prime Ministership for his own family.

At the time when Jang Bahadur rose to the position of Prime Minister, the British East India Company was at the zenith of its power. Without cultivating good relations with this power, there was no possibility

that he could maintain his *statusquo*. So he made a visit to England and also to France in 1851 and cultivated good relations with them. After his return, he made the tradition of firing 21 gun salute on 24th May in order to mark the British sovereign's birthday. He undertook all these steps with a view to please the British government. Similarly, he tried to win favour from the British power by despatching Nepali troops to suppress the Indian Revolt in 1857. The revolt had its beginning with the mutiny of sepoys at Meerut of India. Jang Bahadur personally led 9000 Nepali troops to India. Out of obligation, the East India Company restored Naya Muluk, stretched between Kali and Rapti rivers, to Nepal. The expenditure involved in the training and employment of the Nepali troops in India was borne by the British government.

Jang Bahadur, similarly, tried to elevate and consolidate his position within the country by entering into matrimonial alliance with the royal family. Prior to that, he raised the status of his family from Kunwar to Rana and claimed that his family belonged to the Rajput family of India. Jang Bahadur himself married from the family of the king's collateral, say, Fateh Jang Shah's sister, Hiranyagarbha Kumari. His eldest son, General Jagat Jang, was married with King Surendra's second daughter. He also gave his daughters, Tara Kumari and Lalit Rajyalakshmi, in marriage with the heir apparent Trailokya Bikram Shah. Lalit Rajyalakshmi was the mother of King Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah. Jang Bahadur thus strengthened his own position and that elevated the status of his family through matrimonial alliance with the royal family members. Moreover, he could collect all informations of the palace activities because of this alliance.

Jang Bahadur is also credited in the Nepalese history as a social reformer. During his rule, the Legal Code (*Mulki Ain*) was codified in Nepal. As regards the reforms brought about by this code, the words of Adrien Sever are:-

"The Legal Code reduced the savagery and severity of punishments, and sentence of death and mutilation were henceforth awarded less frequently. Treason, rebellion, desertion in time of war, homicide and cow killing remained capital offences, but the punishments of man slaughter and maiming of cow were reduced to life imprisonment."³⁴

The code helped to curb the tradition of *Sati*. The other reformatory measures introduced by Jang Bahadur dealt with land settlement and revenue in the Tarai area. He also created a national army under an unified command. Wielding sole authority of the nation for more than three decades, Jang Bahadur passed away in 1877 while he was engaged in a big game expedition at Tarai.

Ranauddip Singh:- Ranauddip Singh, the fifth brother of Jang Bahadur succeeded to the position of Prime Minister as well as of Maharaja or sovereign of Kaski and Lamjung after Jang Bahadur's death. While succeeding to the position of Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung, the primogeniture tradition of succession was completely ignored. According to the tradition, it was Jagat Jang, the eldest son of Jang Bahadur, who ought to have succeeded the position. But Dhir Shamsher played a foul game to manipulate the situation so that his sons also might become the Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung while succeeding the position of Prime Minister of Nepal. The act antagonised Jang Bahadur's sons who became staunch opponents of Dhir Shamsher and his sons.

The politics of Nepal, during Ranauddip Singh's Prime Ministership, was characterised by the power struggle between two groups. The first group was represented by Jang Bahadur's sons and the other by Dhir Shamsher's sons. The power struggle between these two groups reached to the full swing when the minor king, Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah, was on the throne of Nepal. At that time, Jagat Jang was implicated on the charge of plotting against Ranauddip Singh and eliminated from the roll of succession to Prime Minister-cum-Maharajaship. After Dhir Shamsher's death, Jagat Jang was called back to Kathmandu by his uncle Prime Minister Ranauddip Singh and his name was reinstated in the list of succession. That decision made the sons of Dhir Shamsher remain far behind in the roll of succession. So they, led by Bir Shamsher, the first son of Dhir Shamsher, staged a coup against their uncle Ranauddip Singh in November, 1885 and assassinated him, Jagat Jang and his son. As regards the assassination, the words of Gimlette are that "One of the brothers (of Bir Shamsher) went with the Shamshere bodyguard, and a company went off to Manora and shot Jagat Jang and his son."³⁵ Many other sons of Jang Bahadur took asylum in British Residency.

Bir Shamsher:- Following Ranauddip Singh's assassination, Bir Shamsher became the Prime Minister of Nepal. After assuming the new position, Bir Shamsher made a new roll of succession eliminating all the sons of his uncle Jang Bahadur from the roll of succession. While perpetuating their own rule, the sons of Dhir Shamsher added Jang Bahadur Rana as a suffix in their name in order to pay tribute to the founder of Rana rule in Nepal.

During Bir Shamsher's prime ministership too, there had been attempts to assassinate the prime minister. Within sixteen months of his assumption to the post of prime minister, Bir Shamsher expelled his own brother Khadga Shamsher to Palpa on the charge of plotting against his life.

³⁵ G.M.D. Gimlette, *Nepal and the Nepalese*, (New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1993), p. 187.

The outstanding contributions made during the rule of this prime minister are:-

"The Bir Hospital (Male and Female), the Durbar High School, now rebaptised the Bhanu Madhyamic Vidyalaya, the Tower Clock, the Bir Library are some of the outstanding specimen of public works of his time. He reduced high incidence of cholera and typhoid through the supply of good pipe-water to Kathmandu and Bhadgaon. The construction of a suspension bridge at Kulekhani and establishment of some hospitals were a few among his other development activities."³⁶

Deva Shamsher:- After the death of Bir Shamsher on 4th March, 1901, his brother Deva Shamsher succeeded him as the Prime Minister and Maharaja. A man of progressive outlook, Dev Shamsher started the first Nepali newspaper '*Gorkhapatra*', emancipated female slaves and proclaimed a scheme of primary education all over the country. All these tasks were undertaken by him within a period of about three months. On 26th June, 1901, he was compelled to resign from his post by his brother Chandra Shamsher.

Chandra Shamsher:- The resignation of Dev Shamsher made his brother Chandra Shamsher the Prime Minister as well as Maharaja. Chandra Shamsher had several young sons by a high caste wife and, therefore, wanted all of them to be elevated on the roll of succession. Hence he divided the Rana family into A, B, and C classes on the basis of their birth. As regards this division, Shaha writes:-

"The 'A' Ranas were the progeny of Ranas who could interdine with any high caste Chhetri family, according to orthodox caste principles; 'B' Ranas were usually born of second wives, with whom all social intercourse except the partaking of boiled rice was permissible; and 'C' Ranas were the offspring of wives and concubines of a lesser status with whom interdining was forbidden."³⁷

In this way Chandra Shamsher paved the way to eliminate B and C class Ranas from the roll of succession to the positions of Prime Minister cum Maharaja.

Chandra Shamsher was the only Rana Prime Minister who had passed matriculation examination. After assuming the post of Prime Minister, he also paid a visit to England like Jang Bahadur. During the First World War, he sent about fourteen thousand troops to the British government on garrison duty in India.

³⁶ Daman Raj Tuladhar, *Contemporary Nepal (1945-1956)*, (Kathmandu: Laxmi Publications, 1980), p.33.

³⁷ Rishikesh Shaha, *An Introduction to Nepal*, (Nepal: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1975), p. 153

Chandra Shamsher made the British representative in Nepal to be upgraded from the position of Resident to Envoy. Thus he attempted to make Nepal distinct from other princely states of India which were under the domination of the British government. To lay emphasis on this distinction more clearly Nepal and England concluded a new treaty on 21st December, 1923. "This made the King of Nepal to be addressed as His Majesty at the diplomatic level and to enable to have a salute of 31 guns as against the previous customary addresses as His Royal Highness and a salute of 21 guns."³⁸ To sum up, the treaty served to define clearly Nepal's international status as being distinct from that of other native states in the Indian sub-continent.

During Chandra Shamsher's Prime Ministership, the traditions of *Sati* and slavery were completely abolished. Many other development tasks were also undertaken during his rule and they may be summarised as:-

1. Starting 14 mile cableway from Dhursing to Matatirtha;
2. Supplying power from Hydro-electric Project at Pharping in Kathmandu;
3. Joining Raxaul and Amlekhganj by a metre-gauge railway-line and Amlekhganj and Bhimpheedi by a motorable road; and
4. Establishing Tri-Chandra College for higher education and Tri-Chandra Military Hospital for treating military personnels; etc.

Bhim Shamsher:- After Chandra Shamsher's death in 1929, his brother Bhim Shamsher became the Prime Minister cum Maharaja. Bhim Shamsher had a lot of C class sons. Hence, he wanted to change Chandra Shamsher's plan of succession. During his rule, Tulasi Meher, a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, was arrested for popularising the spinning wheel. Similarly about 50 young men of Kathmandu were also arrested and fined for petitioning to set up a public library. He died in the year 1932 without making any outstanding contribution to the country.

Juddha Shamsher:- Bhim Shamsher was succeeded by his brother Juddha Shamsher in 1932. Juddha Shamsher removed all the C class Ranas from the roll of succession to Prime Minister cum Maharaja without perpetrating any bloodshed and resistance. Although this policy seemed to success at the initial phase it became the very cause of wrecking the solidarity in Rana family. To quote Shaha "A number of 'C' Ranas with large investments in Indian industries and business joined hands with other Nepalis

in a bid to abolish the Rana regime."³⁹

As a Prime Minister, Juddha Shamsher is credited for constructing a new portion of the Kathmandu city known as New Road. He also paid attention to the development of agriculture and industry in Nepal. In this connection, the Nepal Industrial Board was set up in 1936. The industries established in Nepal on the recommendation of this board were the jute mill, match factory, cotton mills, plywood and bobbin company, hydro-electric company, rice mills etc. The first bank in the country, Nepal Bank Limited, was also opened during the rule of this prime minister.

The other achievements credited to his name were (a) extension of water supply and medical facilities; (b) setting up of a tuberculosis clinic at Tokha; (c) circulation of Gorkhapatra as a biweekly newspaper in lieu of weekly; (d) establishment of a board for conducting S.L.C. examination in Nepal etc.. During his rule, the two Nepali literary magazines,-- *Sharada* and *Udyog*,--were also brought into publication.

During Juddha Shamsher's rule, there had been political uprisings in India against the British rule. The uprisings in India made an impact upon Nepal too. In the initial phase, this uprising entered into Nepal under the cover of religious preachings. Prominent religious leaders like Shukra Raj Shastri and Muralidhar Pandit sought to inculcate political ideas among the people during the course of their preachings. Shukraraj Shastri was arrested when he had returned to Kathmandu after his meeting with Mahatma Gandhi in India. In the mean time, the first political organisation called *Nepal Praja Parishad* distributed and circulated anti-Rana pamphlets in the capital city. The circulation of these pamphlets caused havoc among the Rana rulers. The leaders of the *Nepal Praja Parishad* were rounded up on the charge of engineering the mass assassination of the Ranas. In connection with this charge

"The Prime Minister announced his decision sentencing four of them to death and four to life imprisonment. Twenty-six others were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment; varying from six to twenty years. The rest were released with a fine ranging from 100 to 1,000 rupees. Shukraraj Shastri, Dasrath Chand, Ganga Lal and Dharma Bhakta were executed in January 1941 and are commemorated as martyrs."⁴⁰

³⁹ Shaha, f.n. No. 37, p. 159.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 162.

For further details, please refer to page 306, 314, 324 and 336 of Rajesh Gautam's unpublished thesis on "*Nepalko Prajatantrik Andolanma Nepal Praja Parishadko Bhumika*" submitted by him to Tribhuvan University at Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences on Paukha 2044 V.E..

Padma Shamsher:- In the year 1946, Juddha Shamsher abdicated in favour of his nephew Padma Shamsher. During the Prime Ministership of Padma Shamsher, the political situation in Nepal was not favourable for the Rana rulers. The withdrawal of the British power from India deprived the Rana rulers of the powerful external support. The new government in India was not favourable for the extension of the old Rana rule. The *Nepal Praja Parishad*, the political party brutally suppressed during Juddha Shamsher's rule, began to raise its head again against the Rana authority. It was because of this reason, Padma Shamsher, as a far-sighted ruler, tried to bring certain reforms in the political scenario of the country. He did this by promulgating the 1948 Constitution known as the Government of Nepal Act. Had this constitution been translated into action, the political situation of the country would have improved much. But Padma Shamsher did not have courage to translate this new constitution into action. Chandra Shamsher's sons, who were holding prominent positions in the administration of Nepal, had opposed him vehemently while introducing this constitution. Being overpowered by them, Padma Shamsher resigned from his position in 1948.

Mohan Shamsher:- Padma Shamsher was succeeded by his cousin Mohan Shamsher who was a man of reactionary nature. So he refused to grant constitutional rights to the people, the rights guaranteed by the Government of Nepal Act of 1948. He also did not pay attention to the words of the then Indian Prime Minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru, for political reforms. The result was that the Rana rule could not resist the democratic struggle launched by the Nepali Congress from across the borders of India. Moreover, King Tribhuvan's flight to India added extra strength to this democratic struggle. In the beginning of 1951, Mohan Shamsher succumbed before the struggle and thus the Rana rule in Nepal came to an end.

An Appraisal

The history of Nepal traces the palace as an institution having continuity of existence. Innumerable kings representing one after another dynasties have emerged, ruled and disappeared in the political scenario of Nepal but the palace as a monarchical institution has remained intact since the dawn of her history. Beginning from the Gopala kings to this day, Nepal has never had to experience an alternate institution known as republican system of government.

There had been times when the country was jointly ruled by two or three kings. Never in the history of Nepal, there was any attempt to abolish the institution of monarchy. In spite of weak and tyrant rulers, the palace did not disappear from the political scenario of Nepal. Following the unification process initiated by Prithvi Narayan Shah, the innumerable small principalities of the then time were merged one by one to create a greater Nepal. And the role of the palace in Nepal too changed accordingly. The

succession to the throne of Nepal by a series of minor and imbecile kings resulted the palace to become the centre of conspirational politics. Had Bhimsen Thapa or Jang Bahadur not emerged in the political scenario of Nepal as national heroes, Nepal would have become a colony or part of the then British power. Even by making the kings to remain behind the bars, these national heroes have saved Nepal from the clutches of foreign influence.

In spite of so much savagery, tyranny, brutality and imbecility perpetrated by the kings and royal family members at different times in the name of war, religion, etc., the palace is successful to make an impact in the mind of the Nepalese people. The reason behind it is that the Nepalese people had never been in a position to contemplate on the possibility of a republican form of government. And this is the lesson which the Nepalese history has taught us before the dawn of democracy in 1951.



An Appraisal

The history of Nepal traces the palace as an institution having continuity of existence. Innumerable kings, representatives and other royal dynasties have emerged, ruled and disappeared in the political scenario of Nepal but the palace is a monarchical institution that remained intact since the dawn of its history. Beginning from the Gupta rule in the 5th century, Nepal has never had to experience an alternate institution known as republican system of government.

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Chapter 2

Palace: Nature, Characteristics and Future

Palace as Royal Residence

One of the most ancient institutions inherited by man is the institution of monarchy and his official residence known as the palace. It is a political institution almost as old as human civilization itself. This institution was in the form of small residence of a king in the primitive stage, so to say, when the king was in the form of a tribal leader. The concept of making residence or building appears in human civilization only at the time when man transcended into the age of agriculture after the nomad life of a hunter. In the words of Norwich

"Man has not always been a builder. When he depended on hunting for his survival, he was essentially a nomad, content with caves and makeshift shelter in the forest. But then, some nine or ten thousand years ago, he discovered the secrets of agriculture. For the first time he could indulge in the luxury of a settled habitation, and from that moment, agriculture was born."

When the tribe leader turned into a patriarch, it perhaps took the shape of a small building. Later on, when the patriarch became a king, this institution too changed subsequently giving itself the form of the palace, say, a huge mansion surrounded by a citadel and many courts, gardens, pools, buildings, annexes etc. As the king found himself endowed with more and more power and riches in the later days, he began to think himself as a god on earth. And he began to make his residence or palace befitting his position, to say in other words, as the replica of a genuine paradise. The words "If paradise

¹ John Julius Norwich, *Great Architecture of the world*, (London: Mitchell Beazley publishers Ltd., 1975), P. 9.

exists on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here!"² engraved on the walls of the Mugal emperor, Shah Jehan's audience hall is an outstanding example in this direction.

Different Forms of Palace

The palace, known as office or official residence of a king or sovereign, is available in different forms. In those days when monarchy had been a dominant political force, the palace remained as the most influential power centre of the nation. The palace, under the king or sovereign was, in short, the source of all authority, the 'Great Leviathan' embodying in its personality the sovereignty, dignity and unity of the nation. It was "an authority that cannot be questioned but to whom one could appeal for grace and indulgence."³ The palace ruled the nation with peremptory command at this time. The palaces of almost all the nations of the world before the introduction of democracy have been the palaces of such nature. The nature of such a power centre can be compared with the words of a certain poet and the words of the poet run as:- "I am the monarch of all I survey. My right there is none to dispute."⁴

With the evolution of democratic trend all over the world, absolute monarchies were transformed into constitutional or limited monarchies. As a result, the role of the palace too changed. Now a days, the palace, in the name of the king, monarch, royalty etc., is rather reigning rather than ruling the country. It is because of the non-ruling nature of the palace, the United Kingdom is sometimes taken as the crowned republic. And the people of the United Kingdom, mostly the political parties, would like to continue it if it remains content with the role entrusted to it. In the words of Ogg "Most Labour men, equally with the Conservatives and Liberals, consider that as long as the sovereign remains content with the sort of position that he occupied today, the country will, and should continue, as now a 'crowned republic'.⁵ Now the role of the palace has remained simply a ceremonial, to say in other words, addressing the parliament; administering oath of office to the prime minister and other constitutional heads; receiving foreign ambassadors etc.. The Narayanhity Royal Palace of Nepal, the Buckingham Palace of United Kingdom, the Chitralada Palace of Thailand etc. are, in this way, taking the form of living legends rather than of power centres. Tracing example from the political system of United Kingdom, Almond and Powel Jr. describe the nature of such a ceremonial palace with the words:-

"The Crown symbolises the sum of government powers. This does not mean that the monarch personally determines the major activities

² Henri Sterlin, *The Cultural History of India*, (London: Aurum Press Ltd., 1983), P. 95.

³ Rishikesh Shaha, *Politics in Nepal (1980-1991): Referendum, Stalemate and Triumph of People Power*, (New Delhi, Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 1992), p.1.

⁴ S.N. Sharma, *Our Human Heritage*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1964), p. 25.

⁵ Frederic Austin Ogg, *English Government and Politics*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 95.

of what is referred to as Her Majesty's Government. The Queen gives formal assent to laws passed by Parliament; She may not publicly state an opinion about legislation. The Queen is also responsible for naming the prime minister and dissolving Parliament before a general election. In the actions, the Queen is expected to respect the will of Parliament as communicated to her by the leaders of the governing party. She usually receives the prime minister once a week to discuss current affairs. No modern prime minister has suggested that he followed a policy because of the monarch's wishes."⁶

There have been many other colossal and beautiful palaces in this world. But these palaces have remained today simply as museum pieces exhibiting to the visitors and tourists their art, architecture, courts, gardens etc. of the glorious past. The Fifty-five-windowed Palace and the Hanumandhokha Palace respectively of Bhaktapur and Kathmandu in Nepal, the Red Fort of New Delhi in India are but some of the palaces representing such museum pieces. There are other kinds of palaces too which, although not in existence as show pieces today, are hovering over the mental sky of the people as sweet recollections of the past. The name of these palaces have captivated human mind, specially of the archaeologists and scholars, because of the glorious records left by the makers of these palaces. Taking into account of such palaces of Nepal, someone very remarkably comments

"Nepalese antiquity has records of Royal Palaces such as 'Mangriha' of the Lichhavi King Man Dev, and Kailash Kut Bhavan of Anshu Verma. The style of their architecture, their size and sometimes even their location are matters about which we lack definite records. Hopefully, the excavations combined with historical research being conducted presently may reveal to us not only these much sought-after treasures of our past but may even unearth the portals of the mansion under which Lord Buddha himself walked as a prince."⁷

Popular Form of Palace

Among the so many forms of palace, the most popular one today is the palace which plays the role of a living legend, so to say, palace based on constitutional monarchy. It is the most popular form of palace because in a country where such palace exists, there the people remain as the sovereign authority. The people rule their country by sending their representatives to the parliament through the medium of election. Monarchy in such a country remains simply as a tool in the hand of the parliament.

⁶ Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell Jr., *Comparative Politics Today: A World View*, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1980), p. 159.

⁷ *Narayanhiroy Royal Palace: House of the King of Nepal*, (Kathmandu: Principal Press Secretariat (Royal Palace), n.d.), pp. 1-2.

A study of history reveals how such a palace was evolved out in the world only after the experiment and struggle of centuries. It had its origin firstly in the signing of the *Magna Carta* by King John of Great Britain in 1215. The *Magna Carta* was, in reality,

"a method of bringing pressure to bear upon the king if he began to break his promises. This method was to be tried before there should be any resort to force. If it failed, then their general right of insurrection, which they had only postponed to try their expedient, would be available, but in their written statement of it they did not include the right to depose the king, though that was logically involved"⁸

With the evolution of Parliamentary System, the power of the palace was furthermore curtailed. The power of the palace was curtailed for the first time in 1648 when King Charles I was brought to trial and subsequently executed too. In the words of Adams "the king, who resolutely refused to recognise the court, was sentenced on January 27 and executed on the 30th, 1649." ⁹ Monarchy was abolished in Great Britain for a certain period and was again reestablished in 1660.

There had been other periods too when the British parliament brought a dramatic change in the form of the palace. In 1688, it made James II to flee away because of his failure to co-operate with the parliament. In 1701, the parliament made the Act of Settlement and determined the procedure regarding succession to the British throne. With Pitt the Younger's accession as Prime Minister, the Cabinet System in all its essentials was finally fixed. From this time onwards, the king ceased to choose and dismiss cabinet ministers. The ministers were chosen and dismissed by the parliament.

The parliamentary system evolved in United Kingdom made an impact on most of the monarchical countries of the world. As a result, this system was transplanted in other countries like Japan, Thailand, Cambodia, Nepal etc.. The people of these countries are accepting the palace because it has ceased to exist as a sovereign authority. They have accepted it simply because it can play the role as a symbol of national unity.

Difference between Palace and King

The meaning of the word 'palace' is but an official residence of a king or sovereign. The word 'palace' thus signifies two things at the same time,-- (a) a grand office from where the king, as a sovereign, rules the nation, and (b) a huge castle where the king, as a sovereign, resides. In this way it denotes a colossal mansion from where the king rules the nation. The

⁸ George Burton Adams, *Constitutional History of England*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1960), 137-8.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 320.

king, on the other hand, is a master who controls this grand official residence known as the palace. The king, as a mortal human being, may die while the palace may remain for long with the new king succeeding in it. Thus the palace represents the institution of kingship, monarchy or royalty as the British saying goes: "The king is dead; long live the king"

Palace as Power Centre

The palace remains as the most influential power centre in a nation where monarchy has been functioning as the sovereign authority. All the political authorities of the nation are exercised by this power centre. The other organs or offices of the government function only as the subordinate agents to carry on the orders of this institution. All the laws and acts emanate from this institution and derive their validity from here. In this way, the palace is the bearer of sovereignty, to say in other words, the position of the palace is supreme, unlimited and self-determined.

The palace combines in it the functions of all the branches of the government, so to say, the palace is the law-giver, the judge, the executive head and the military commander. Thus this institution represents vigour, strength, unity of purpose, continuity and consistency of policy. It is because of these qualities, the palace appears as a beneficial antidote to chaos, corruption and weak government. To quote Nicollo Machiavelli

"...the only way to establish any kind of order there is to found a monarchical government; for where the body of the people is so corrupt that the laws are powerless for restraint, it becomes necessary to establish some superior power which, with a royal hand, and with full and absolute powers, may put curb upon the executive ambition and corruption of the powerful."¹⁰

This institution has become much more beneficial at a time when the nation is involved with danger, national crisis or emergency. It has played commendable roles in countries where the people are illiterate, living a medieval mode of life and have no vision about their rights and duties. In this way, absolute monarchy can be justified as a legitimate mode of government for dealing with barbarians. But the point to be taken into consideration is that the end of such government should be to improve the conditions of the people.

With the advancement of education and democracy, the palace as a power centre has proved to be the most unpopular political institution. The reason behind it is that it did not have to respond to the country and the people for its existence. Taking note of this very fact, King Magnus in a play says that "a King does not have to worry about his political fate for he does

¹⁰ Quoted in George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., 1975), p. 326.

not have to campaign to be elected."¹¹ History also traces how King Nero remained unresponsive to the country and people when Rome was burning. He was found playing with his flute even on such moment.

Theory Advocating Divine Right of Palace

Political philosophers and social scientists have furnished us with manifold theories advocating the rights of monarchy or the palace. Among them, the theory of divine right or divine origin of kings is of paramount importance. According to this theory, monarchy is an institution created by god to save mankind from destruction. And the king is the representative or deputy of God on earth. He is a divinely appointed agent responsible only to God and not to the people. The duty of the people is to obey the orders of the king. To resist against the king's order is but a great sacrilege. The advocates of this theory, in this way, place the king above the people and the law. According to them, nothing on earth can limit his will or restrict his power. His words are to be taken as laws and his actions always as just and benevolent. To complain against the authority of the king or to characterize his action as unjust are but sins for which the people have had to meet divine ordeal. In this way, the theory advocates not merely divine right of kings but equally divine origin of kings.

The leading exponent of the theory of divine right of kings was James I. Later on the Stuart kings of England stressed on this theory mostly. The words of James I in this regard are:-

"(Kings) are the breathing images of God upon earth... The state of monarchy is the supermost thing upon earth; for Kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon God's throne, but even by God himself they are called Gods... And so it follows of necessity, that kings were the authors and makers of laws, and not the laws of the kings... That which concerns the mystery of the king's power is not lawful to be disputed; for that is to wade into weakness of princes and to take away the mystical reverence that belongs unto them that sit in the throne of God."¹²

Some of the religious texts of Hinduism too advocates this theory of divine origin of kings. To quote the *Manu Samhita*, "The Lord created a king for the protection of this whole creation, taking (for the purpose) eternal particles of Indra, of the Wind, of Yama, of the Sun, of Fire, of Varuna, of the moon, and of the Lord of Wealth (Kubera)."¹³

¹¹ Quoted in Prem Sharma, *50 Days of Pro-democracy Movement in Nepal-1990*, (Kathmandu: Centre for Economic Development and Administration, 1992), p. 13.

¹² Quoted in Sabine, f.n. No. 10, pp. 368-9.

¹³ R.C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalkar (eds.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1968), p. 305.

Theory Refuting Divine Right of Palace

The theory of divine right of kings had been refuted in the oriental world since time immemorial while in the occident world it was being done only a few centuries back. The *Mahabharata*, the encyclopadia of Hindu thinking, too, has contradicted the theory of divine right of kings on many places. According to this text

"In the beginning there was neither state, nor monarch; neither law, nor the criminal. The result in due course was that men were sunk in greed, wealth and self-indulgence; in the law of jungle, which is described picturesquely as *Matsya Nyaya*-- the rule of fish, the big ones eating up the smaller. It was thus to ensure safety and to secure social order that the state (kingship) was created."¹⁴

Kingship, in this way, was the outcome of the desire of man for safety and security, to say in other words, for a social order in which he can live in peace and enjoy the fruits of his own labour. Referring to this fact Kautilya also has expressed

"People suffering from anarchy first elected Manu to be their king and allotted one-sixth of the grains grown and one-tenth of merchandise as sovereign dues. Fed by this payment kings took upon themselves the responsibility of maintaining the safety and security of their subjects."¹⁵

Buddhism and Jainism, the religions expounded in Aryavarta about twenty-six centuries back, do not give place to any almighty God or Creator and hence there can be no question of having the theory like divine origin or divine right of kings in them. The *Tevijja Sutta* of the *Digha Nikaya* can be cited as one of the best examples in this direction. In this Sutta,

"...the Buddha asks the brahmins whether they or their teachers have ever seen this God and whether any one of them could give a proper description of this creator, to which the brahmins reply that none of them could give a proper description of that creator. When the brahmins say this, the Buddha points out the absurdity of their belief by saying that their effort is like the effort of a foolish man who decides to marry and makes preparations for the marriage of an imaginary beauty queen about whose existence he or anybody knows next to nothing."¹⁶

Almost all the texts of Hindu polity have traced the state of nature before the founding of state as a state full of anarchy and chaos. According to them, it was a stage of uncertainty where the law of jungle prevailed. In order

¹⁴ K.M. Panikkar, *The State and the Citizen*, (Asia Publishing House, 1956), p. 113.

¹⁵ Majumdar and Pusalkar, f.n. No. 13, p. 305.

¹⁶ W.G. Weera Ratna, "Buddhism, A Teaching that Upholds Human Dignity" *Vesak Buddhist Cultural Exhibition Souvenir Magazine*, (Singapore: Singapore Buddhist Mission, 1983), p. 151.

to get rid of this uncertainty and chaos, they elected a king who would help them to lead a peaceful and prosperous life. The words of Dhar in this regard are:-

"The rationalistic school-- permeating the entire gamut of our ancient literature-- assumes a state of nature which necessitates the rise of kingship. This is expressed in the concept of *Matsya Nyaya* (means the logic of fish) or as we may call it the law of jungle, whose operating principle is 'might is right'-- the bigger fish devouring the small ones. This anarchic state is described in the *Kautilya Arthashastra* and other *Arthashastras*, including epics of political works, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Smritis*, etc... People overwhelmed by the state of anarchy (*Matsya Nyaya*), accepted Manu, son of the sun as their king. His due was fixed as one-sixth of the crops in kind, one-tenth of the merchandise and share of all other subsistence, the King's *Dharma* is to provide welfare and security to his subjects."¹⁷

Baudhyana also expresses a similar view with the words "the king was to protect his subjects, receiving as his pay a sixth (of their grants)."¹⁸ All the facts mentioned above reveal how the palace, say monarchy, kingship or royalty, has been an institution based on contract or selection rather than on divine origin.

Palace as Guardian of Dharma

Strictly speaking, the Hindu political authorities have vested sovereign authority of the nation in law (*dharma*) rather than in the palace or monarchy. Although, the palace was extolled to the height of the sky, the main task entrusted to the palace or monarchy had been to protect *dharma*. And the *dharma* of the palace was to maintain law and order and to lead the nation to the path of peace and prosperity. In the words of K. M. Munshi

"...the kings were the protectors of the *Dharma*. They were invested with the right to conquer and destroy enemies but there was no right to destroy what they willed. Their duty to protect the people was inalienable; if they failed, they forfeited the people's allegiance"¹⁹

Dhar also expresses a similar view with the words:-

"So far as the king was concerned, he was to provide the individual with every amenity of life so that if the king failed to provide these amenities to the individual to carry on their avocations, he forfeited

¹⁷ Somnath Dhar, *Kautilya and the Arthashastra*, (New Delhi: Marwah Publications, 1981), p. 44.

¹⁸ Majumdar and Pusalkar, f.n. No. 13, p. 305.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. IX.

the right to be the king and had the option to quit the country."²⁰

A study of these texts reveals that the king's responsibility in regard to the people's welfare was a heavy one. The oath which the king takes in the eve of his coronation hours also supports this very fact. And the texts regarding coronation oath run as:- "Let the Kshyatriya be sworn through the great Indra ritual. He is to repeat with faith, 'Between the night I was born and the night I die, whatever good I might have done, my heaven, my life and my progeny may be deprived of, if I oppress you'."²¹ He furthermore has to pledge that he would see the growth of the country regarding it as God himself and he would never be arbitrary.

The coronation oath of the occidental world also traces a picture like this as regards the protection of law or *dharma*. Enumerating on the coronation oath of the occidental world, Marshall makes a comment:-

"In the Middle ages, a king was deemed to be a king only if he ruled in accordance with the law, which he promised to do in his coronation oath. The oath itself goes back to the Germanic tribes; it appears in the Frankish sources and in early English history. By the time of King Ethelred this oath had become stereotyped. It may be analysed, says Mc Kanhie in his Magna Carta, into three promises: 'peace to God's Church and people; suppression of violence in men of every rank; justice and mercy in all judgements.'"²²

Pointing to the strict code of conduct to be pursued by a king, Manu observes that "where another common man would be fined one *Karshapana*, the king shall be fined one thousand, that is the settled rule."²³ Writing foreword to the book *The Age of Imperial Unity*, Dr. K.M. Munshi highlights on the features of the Hindu palace with the words:-

"Kingship was to be a religious trust. *Rajdharm*, *Smriti* and tradition, interpreted from time to time, were to regulate life. The learned and the pure, vowed to poverty were to be the indispensable guides. The ambition and rapacity of the kings were, therefore, controlled by a fundamental law, the bases of which were:- first, the *Smriti* or tradition codified; second, *Parishad*, the assembly of the learned, the interpreter. And lastly, a military overlord was considered necessary as the country grew larger, a *Maharajadhiraja* or *Chakravartin*--the protector of *Dharma*. The last in reality was to come in succeeding epoch."²⁴

Enumerating on the multi-dimensional aspects of *dharma*, Sharma makes a comment:-

²⁰ Dhar, f.n. No. 17, p. 44.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 51.

²² James Marshall, *Swords and Symbols*, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1969), p. 10.

²³ Majumdar and Pusalkar, f.n. No. 13, p. 319.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. XII.

"It will not be inapposite in this context to cite the following Taoist maxims:-

'Cultivated in the individual, Virtue will become genuine;

Cultivated in the family, Virtue will become abundant;

Cultivated in the Village, Virtue will multiply;

Cultivated in the state, Virtue will prosper;

Cultivated in the world, Virtue will become universal.'

In ancient India, the term used in the above sense was *Dharma*. It had individual, social and political application ... In the political connotation, only two points may be stressed here:- (1) The King was regarded as an embodiment of divinity--*Raja Pratyakshya Devata*; (2) *Panchamukhi-Parmeshwara* -- God speaks through the mouth of the five (i.e. the people's representatives) ... What is of greater significance is the over-riding concept of *Dharma*. *Dharma-rajya* in the *Mahabharata* and *Ram-rajya* in the *Ramayana* are two individual and political idealisation (in the national epics) that we might relevently cite here."²⁵

Krishnamurti also sums up the features of the Hindu palace with the words:-

"The Hindu political theorists like Kautilya, Kamandhaka, Bhisma and Raghunath Suri have maintained that politics is the art of manipulation of the instruments of power in the interests of the community. According to them, the king is powerful but *Dharma* is the shield of the powerful. In other words, the absolute and universal moral law prevails over the entire realm and conditions the deepest reflexes of the ruler. In the Hindu polity great emphasis is laid on the personality structure and trained capacities of the king. The ancient texts on polity declare that Kingship is elective and not hereditary. Even in the case of Lord Rama, his illustrious father, Emperor Dasharatha, had to summon the council of elders, enumerate the sovereign virtues of Rama and appeal to them to elect him as his successor. There are myriad instances like the sons of Sagar who were either banished or beheaded for their subversive activities."²⁶

Palace as Centre of Intrigues

It does not matter whether it be in the east or in the west, the palace has remained everywhere and everytime the same, that is, the centre of intrigues or conspiracies. This has been a fact traced out not merely by the

²⁵ Sharma, f.n. No. 17, pp. 20-1.

²⁶ Y.G. Krishnamurti, *Political Ideology of King Mahendra*, (New Delhi: Adi Shakti Literary Foundation, n.d.), p. 45.

world history but equally by the holy texts of the ancient world known as mythologies. There had been a time, when Rama, the personality revered by the Hindus as God-incarnate, had have to face such an intrigue or conspiracy. Instead of being installed as the king of Ayodhya, he was made to suffer the exile of fourteen years next day. Similarly, the *Mahabharata* traces so many stories in regard to such intrigues or conspiracies. Bhisma, previously known as Devabrata, is one of the greatest heroes of the Kurushetra war. But he remained a life long celibate, even deprived of his right to the throne of Hastinapur, because of such an intrigue. And this intrigue was hatched by the father of Satyabati who wished that the progeny of his daughter might succeed the throne of Hastinapur. Similarly, Dhristarastra, the crown prince, was deprived of the throne of Hastinapur in order to give place to Pandu, his younger brother, because of the palace conspiracy. And this became the prime cause leading to the great battle of Kurukshetra. The general view or opinion is that Duryodhana's fraud was responsible for the battle of Kurukshetra. Contrary to this view, the author had once expressed:-

"the succession to the throne of Hastinapur by the younger son Pandu, in the presence of the elder son Dhristarastra or the rightful heir-apparent, is not a matter to be forgotten by a statesman like Duryodhana. It was because of this fact Yudhisthira had got the right to claim the throne which would have been his own (Duryodhana's) possession in future."²⁷

History is replete with the stories of so much of palace intrigues or conspiracies which one cannot count in fingers. Even in Aryavarta, Prince Ajatsatru imprisoned his own father, King Bimbisara, to secure the glorious throne of Rajgriha. Virudhaka (Vidduva) also having dethroned his father Prasenjit, King of Kosala, ascended the throne. One of the most popular emperors of India named Ashoka is believed to have massacred ninety-nine of his brothers with a view to safeguard his own throne. The *Rajatarangini* also gives a lot of information about the then palace conspiracies. There have similarly been so many instances which expose how the kings, queens, princes, princesses, ministers, courtiers and clowns had have to suffer murder, suicide, exile, punishment, deposition from position etc. for the offences they never had committed. These stories trace how the palace had remained as a naked sword which can be used anytime by anyone who possessed it. It is with these matters in view, Marshall makes a commentary:-

"Political history is a series of tales of this kind. Again and again the story of the slaves destroying their rulers, and the rulers who, realising the hazardous nature of their sovereignty fight to guard it. And although the sword is now often swathed in some symbolic scabbard of civilisation, the war of the ruler against possible successor is as bitter as ever. For it is the destiny of the head that

²⁷ Sanu Bhai Dangol, "Mahabharata: Eka Dristikon", *Pratidhwani Fortnightly*, (Kathmandu: Paukha 2022 V.E.), p. 31.

wears the crown that its sleep must be fitful and its days numbered."²⁸

Servitude towards Palace

The palace had its own days both in the east and in the west. In those days when the palace was the only source of power, position, authority and economy, the distinguished jurists, poets and writers of that time sang a lot of eulogic songs in praise of the palace and royalties. While singing these songs, they tried to raise the status of the king to that of God and of the palace to that of earthly heaven. It was but natural for them to do so because on these songs depended their power, position, economy and other facilities. And without them there was the possibility that they might lose the very loaves and fishes which they had been enjoying since a long. It was with a view like this, Marshall comments again with the words:-

"The long line of distinguished writers and jurists who pronounced this doctrine of supremacy were grinding axes for rulers whom they served. Thus, when Bodin, in his great work *De Republica*, says:- '*Majestas est summa in cives acsodites legibus que soluta posestas*', he is talking in order to justify the absolutism of the later Valois kings and give to a personal sovereign the theoretical justification for the later claim of Louis XIV, '*L' stat C' est moi*.' So too, Bracton, writing to defend the power of the English kings, tells us *Lex is Rex*."²⁹

Composing literature in praise of the palace and royalties has been a trend practised not merely by the palace poets and court clowns but equally by the great personalities known as saints and seers. In this context, the author had also written:-

"As Bhishma had have to appear in the battlefield of Kurukshetra, although he did not like, under the financial constraints of Duryodhana, so had have the financially constrained palace poets-- Kalidas and Aswaghosh-- to do in the sphere of literature. But it is also a fact that Valmiki and Vyasha, the poets known as most ideal personalities, also had to succumb to the same constraints which made the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* the epics of idealism, to say in other words, the texts based specially on flattery, servility and lopsidedness."³⁰

This kind of literature based on idealism made an impact on the ordinary people to presume the kings as gods and the palace as the institution representing heaven. Moreover, the power and economy acquired by the kings

²⁸ Marshall, f.n. No. 22, p. 01.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 5.

³⁰ Sanu Bhai Dangol, *Stray Sentiments*, (Kathmandu: Gautam Bajracharya and Laxman Dangol, 1991), p. v.

and the luxury and glamour they enjoyed helped to enhance this feeling among the common people. This has been a trend appearing not merely among the ordinary or uneducated people but equally among the educated mass. In the words of Robert G. Weston

"The most ordinary man become awe-inspiring when encased in the riches of a huge realm and all the pomp human can deliver; surrounded by glitter and jewelled trappings, with colour and pageantry infinitely beyond ordinary men, the hallowed autocrat seems superhuman to the simple, and tingles the nerves even of the educated... Power, no matter how come by, is almost equivalent to greatness in the ordinary estimation; when it is made manifest by a brilliant display, few can avoid being at least dazzled. The higher the one stands over the many, the more easily are mysterious powers attributed to him... Certainly, the power of the ruler over their lives is apparent and conducive to deep respects."³¹

Identifying royal personalities with Gods is a trend pursued not only by the commoners or the uneducated people of the past but also by the well educated people of modern times. Even a Harvard educated king of Nepal, Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, seems to pursue this trend. Exemplifying King Birendra's outlook in this context, Chadwick comments that "His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev is considered a god by himself--an incarnation of the Hindu Lord Vishnu with a Harvard education."³² When questioned by a journalist about how he felt at being looked upon as God, the King replied that "his people accept him as a god, and that his feelings did not enter into this matter."³³

Palace as Root of Servile Mentality

The palace has changed its role on almost all the countries where democracy is being practised. Absolute monarchy is being transformed into constitutional monarchy everywhere. Today, the palace, on most of the countries, enjoys the role simply of ceremonial nature. In spite of all these facts, the continuing existence of the palace has made the government as well as the people of a country to suffer from some sort of servile mentality. Even the establishment of democracy has not been able to give a dead blow to a servile attitude like this. The result is that even the elected governments of most of the countries like Nepal, United Kingdom etc. are referring themselves as the government of His Majesty or Her Majesty in lieu of as the government of the people or as of the country. Similarly the government officials and the people are addressing themselves as 'subjects'³⁴ in lieu of as

³¹ Quoted in Shaha, f.n. No. 3, p. 13.

³² Douglas H. Chadwick, "New Forces Challenge the Gods at the Crossroads of Kathmandu", *National Geographic Magazine* Vol. 11, No. 6, (Washington: July 1987), p. 41.

³³ Shaha, f.n. No. 3, p. 13.

³⁴ *Collins Gem English Dictionary*, (Calcutta: Rupa and Co., 1990), p. 606.

people while referring themselves to the palace or royalties.

Referring to this kind of servile mentality, as is prevalent in Japan, Trokawa Daikichi in his article 'The Emperor System Today' emphatically writes:-

"Despite its total newness, however, the life support of the Emperor system remains the tenacious discrimination mentality among the people, the proclivity to worship the powerful and disdain the inferior and weak. Even through post war society and economy have been thoroughly remodelled, the subject mentality persists and, remaining strong, it ensures the survival of the Emperor system. At the same time, the continuing existence of the Emperor system feeds the subject mentality. In short, the persistence of this mentality from 17th or 18th century is what allows the Emperor system to exist today."³⁵

Difference between Modern and Traditional Palaces

The palace, at the present time, has been functioning specifically in two ways and the ways are:- (a) firstly as an institution representing modern monarchy with limited constitutional powers, and (b) secondly as the institution of traditional monarchy but with modern outlook and vested with all authoritarian powers. The monarchy functioning in Nepal before the re-introduction of democracy in 1990 was of the second type of monarchy while the monarchy of today represents the first type of monarchy. Samuel P. Huntington in his article 'The Political Modernization of Traditional Monarchies' has visualized four possibilities for the modernization of traditional monarchies and the possibilities are:- (a) Invest the political system with just enough power to make it bearable to the monarch, (b) Draw on both traditional and popular sources of authority, (c) Centralize power and concurrently try to modernize the society, and (d) Stop or retard the process of modernizing.

While visualizing these four possibilities, Huntington comes to conclusion that there is no future for traditional monarchies on a long term or permanent basis. Unless and until they begin to transform themselves into modern constitutional monarchies gradually and consciously like that of United Kingdom, Holland, Belgium and the Scandivian countries, it is likely that they may not survive. In this very article, he also has presented two typologies illustrating the difference between modern and traditional monarchies. The two typologies are reproduced here for the knowledge of the readers.

³⁵ Quoted in Krishna Bahadur Verma, *What I found in Japan*, (Kathmandu: Nepal-Nippan Research Studies Centre, 1985), p. 17.

"Table 1

Typologies of Contemporary Monarchies

	Traditional		Modern
	Ruling	Oligarchy	Parliamentary
Principal function of monarch	Rule and reign	Reign	Reign
Principal source of legitimacy	Monarchy	Monarchy	People
Principal efficient authorities	Monarch, bureaucracy, army, perhaps parties	Army and bureaucracy	Cabinet parties and parliament
Scope of political participation	Narrow to medium	Narrow	Broad

Table 2

Political Systems and Power Configurations

Distribution of Power	Amount of Power	
	Small	Large
Centralized	Bureaucratic Empire, Absolute Monarchy	Totalitarian dictatorship
Dispersed	Feudalism 'Pyramidal Structures'	Constitutional Democracy" ³⁶

Questions on Utility of Palace

With the spread of education, specially with the enhancement of western education, a new trend is being developed in the political arena of the world. The people everywhere are beginning to question on the traditional values and hereditary institutions. The values and institutions are being questioned today not merely in terms of utility but equally in terms of equality, liberty and fraternity. The palace, the most ancient hereditary political institution, is no exception in this questioning. With this questioning most of the political philosophers and social scientists turned their eyes towards the pages of history for answer. In this connection, they got history simply as the record of imbecile and fool rulers where the statesman and sage rulers were found mostly missing. It is because of these facts traced out by history, some of the political scientists like Stephen Leacock were compelled to admit how a hereditary ruler seems on the face of things as absurd as the hereditary mathematician or hereditary poet laureate.

The other questions that arose in this connection are whether kings and palaces really represent the vicars of God? Or they are simply the men and institutions exploiting the nations? In answer to these questionings arose the people's uprising and revolutions leading ultimately to the execution of the kings of England and France. To quote Nehru "... the people of England rose against their king Charles I and defeated him and even put him to death, ... the people of France had a great revolution and decided to have no more of kings."³⁷ Expressing resentment towards the kings and emperors of Europe, Danton, one of the prominent leaders of French revolution "addressed the assembled crowds and hurled his challenge at those other kings 'The kings of Europe would challenge us', he cried, 'we throw them the head of a king'."³⁸

Similarly, tracing the life-style of the present kings and royal family members, Bhola Chatterji writes:-

"As for the remnants of royalty, a distasteful anachronism, they had best be seen not in corridors of power but at Ascot or casinos of Southern France. It is ludicrous that someone should, because of the accident of his birth, be divinely ordained to rule, making nonsense of all that man has done so far to liberate himself and his fellowmen."³⁹

The re-establishment of constitutional monarchy in Cambodia in 1993 under former King Norodom Sihanouk has been a matter of great consolation for most of the palaces and palace supporters of the present world. But the point that is to be noted is that the re-establishment of monarchy like this can be had only when kings and monarchs are prepared to stake their lives and thrones for the sake of the people and the nation. Moreover, such a king or monarch has had to remain simply as a symbol of nationality devoid of any power in the day to day affairs of the nation. As regards the present position of King Norodom Sihanouk, the weekly *Newsweek* makes a comment:-

"The next day at the Royal Palace beside the Mekong, the 70-year old Sihanouk displayed equal vigour as he swore to uphold the country's new Constitution. With that, he resumed the title he had first accepted in 1941 and then abandoned 14 years later: King of Cambodia. His main job will be to help end civil war that has tortured the country roughly a quarter century. The Constitution, which was formally accepted two days before Sihanouk's return, has given him hardly any power in daily affairs, instead enshrining the

³⁷ Jawahar Lal Nehru, *Letter from a Father to his Daughter*, (New Delhi: Children's Book Trust, 1988), p. 50.

³⁸ Jawahar Lal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History*, (New Delhi: Jawahar Lal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1995), p. 298.

³⁹ Bhola Chatterji, *Palace, People and Politics*, (New Delhi: Ankur Publishing House, 1980) P.6.

king as 'the symbol of national unity and continuity'.⁴⁰

And, in the same way, Fredric Austin Ogg, in regard to the survival of kingship in United Kingdom, writes:-

"(1) The survival of kingship has proved no impediment to the progressive development of democratic government. If royalty had been found blocking the road to fuller control of public affairs by the people, it is inconceivable that all the forces of tradition could have pulled it through the past seventy-five or eighty years. (2) The royal establishment does not cost the nation much, considering the returns on the investment; in actual figure, the outlay is only about seven-one hundredths of one percent of the total British budget. (3) The cabinet system, upon which the entire governmental order of Great Britain hinges, has nowhere been proved a workable plan without the presence of some titular head, some dignified and detached figure whether a king or, as in France, a president with certain of the attributes of kingship; and nothing is clearer than that if monarchy were to be abandoned in Britain, provision would have to be made for a president or other 'chief executive' raising all sorts of troublesome questions about his powers and entailing serious possibilities for the cabinet system itself."⁴¹

Future of Palace

Today, the palace is being taken as a very expensive institution, to say in other words, economically unviable even for a nation like United Kingdom. It was because of this expensive nature, the people of United Kingdom have raised voice time and again against the financial burden the nation had been shouldering as regards the Buckingham Palace. As a result, the Buckingham Palace has come forward with the words of tax-paying. But these words of tax-paying also could not tide over the hostility of the British people towards financing the palace. Tracing ICM poll as example, Bovine comments very critically that

"The poll finding suggests the Queen's decision to join her subjects in paying tax from last April has not stemmed the ground swell of hostility towards financing the royals. Almost three-quarters of those questioned (73 per cent) want to axe the royals' state aid-- the Queen's L 7.9 million-a-year Civil List and associated payments of nearly L 1 million to the Duke of Edinburg and the Queen Mother. Only 21 per cent believe the taxpayer should continue to foot the bill."⁴²

⁴⁰ Ron Moreau, "The Once and Present King", *Newsweek*, (USA), October 4, 1993.

⁴¹ Ogg, f.n. No. 5, pp. 115-116.

⁴² Anthony Bovine, "Verdict on royals: No more Cash", *The Observer*, (London) December 26, 1993.

In Nepal too, there have been people who raised voice against the financial burden they had shouldered in order to maintain the palace. Among the so many voices raised in this way, the voice of the communist group seems to be most vehement and critical. Even during the authoritarian rule of Panchayat System, the communist group in Nepal did not lag behind to raise such voices. Citing the heavily burdening budget allocation as example, this group has termed the budget allocation as the looping in the name of the palace and has asked the people to give a dead blow to this over burdening institution. In this context, the commentary made by the *Barga Sangharsha* (Class Struggle), the mouth organ of the then Maoists and Leninists, in its issue of 5th Kartik, 2043 V.E., may be taken as the burning example. Tracing the budget allocation of 2043-44 V.E. (1987-88), the mouth organ comments:-

"It (the monarchy) is shamelessly expending a large portion of revenue for its family welfare,-- the revenue raised every year from the people and also acquired as foreign assistance. The budget which was made to pass this year through the National Panchayat reveals how this absolute monarchy had succeeded in having allocated a large portion of expenditure for its own family. A short description of this allocation may be given as:-

1. For the king	Rs. 40,00,000
2. For the queen	Rs. 6,00,000

....

15. For administrative works of the king	Rs. 1,67,00,000
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Total	Rs. 2,55,00,000
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It is only an example of direct and self-revealing exploitation perpetrated by the royal family.

Today, our country is becoming one of the poorest countries in the world. More than sixty five percent of the total population are under poverty line. From among the property raised by exploiting such poor people, even the children and old family members of the great feudocrats and of bureaucrats, who do not have any duty to perform, raise hundred of thousand rupees as their remuneration and enjoy heavenly pleasure. They are invested not merely with the political, economic, military and legal authority but equally with national sovereignty. This family has remained as the most exploiting and most dominating among the so many exploiting families of Nepal. And the first task that is to be performed by the country is to give a dead blow to the dictatorial rule concentrated in the hands of this family. Until and unless absolute monarchy is eliminated and people's democratic republic established, the horrible misutilisation of national economy will not come to an end. Nor will the national property be properly utilised. This (exploitation) is one of the most

important factors that made monarchy the prominent enemy of the people."⁴³

Being aware of the financial burden the nation will have to face as regards the palace, Norodom Sihanouk, the reinstated new monarch of Cambodia, has planned to run his palace specifically with the help of foreign donation. As regards this plan, the weekly *Newsweek* writes again:-

"If opening of Buckingham Palace to paying visitors doesn't help Queen Elizabeth balance the royal budget, she could take a hint from the King of Cambodia. Last week Norodom Sihanouk disclosed his plan for financing his monarchy without burdening the public treasury; he 'll simply keep on accepting money from foreign governments. In a fax from Beijing shortly before his return to Phon Penh, he announced that several countries will continue to support him as they did during his years of exile... 'Thanks to these great friendly nations'. Sihanouk wrote, 'myself, my family, my cabinet, my secretariat, my domestic staff have absolutely no need to receive money from our state or government.'"⁴⁴

All the facts mentioned above trace how the days of the palace are over. "Today", according to Sudhir Sharma, "monarchy has disappeared from most of the countries of the world. The legacy of monarchy has remained alive only on twenty or twenty-two countries but that too just for formality. Somewhere monarchy has remained as the mouthpiece of capitalists while on others as the indicator of ignorance."⁴⁵ Similarly as regards the artificiality in the survival of monarchy, the words of Muni are:-

"There are indeed only a few reigning monarchs in the world today and, wherever they are, there is a sense of artificiality and transition in their survival. The concept of popular legitimacy is in harmony with a constitutional, non-interfering monarch, or with a prince who has given up his traditional privileges and transformed himself into an active politician and competing power-seeker, but not with an active and assertive King who while his 'divine right' to rule also wants to enjoy the best of popular politics."⁴⁶

Depicting a picture of erosion in the future role of palace, the *Punarjagaran Weekly*, in its editorial, writes

"Monarchy has become a vanishing and rare institution of this globe at this time when the earth is likely to witness the 21st century. It is particularly because of the absence of the relative equilibrium

⁴³ *Janadesh Weekly*, (Kathmandu), January 3, 1995.

⁴⁴ Moreau, f.n. No. 40, p. 25.

⁴⁵ Sudhir Sharma, "Ke Rajtantra Sandhai Nirankushtako Pratik Hunchha?" *Prakash Weekly*, (Kathmandu), October 11, 1993.

⁴⁶ S.D. Muni, *India and Nepal: A Changing Relationship*, (New Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1992), p. 21.

between people's aspirations and monarchy, monarchies have been wiped out from the world stadium gradually. Only those monarchies have succeeded to exist in the new roles of the present age,--the monarchies which, being aware of the time factor, had become capable in upholding the aspirations of the people. Rest of the monarchical institutions have been buried into the annals of history."⁴⁷

While studying all these factors, it can be correctly speculated that the palace can make a survival in the present world only when it succeeds to practise the manners of the time following popular aspirations. Otherwise, it is sure that it will have to meet the fate as had once been forewarned by Farukh, King of Egypt, about four decades back and the forewarning is:- "In future, there will be only five kings in the world,-- four in the playing cards and one in United Kingdom."⁴⁸



⁴⁷ *Punarjagaran Weekly*, (Kathmandu), December 28, 1993.

⁴⁸ Hari Rokka, "Rajako Bhumikama Antarrastriya Samarthan", *Prakash Weekly*, (Kathmandu: July 26, 1993), p. 6.

Chapter 3

PALACE AND NEPALESE POLITICS (1951 TO 1990)

Introduction

Nepal remained in throes of political upheavals even after the ushering of democracy in 1951. The overthrowing of a century-old Rana autocracy and the proclamation of democracy by King Tribhuvan in that very year also did not help to evolve out a democratic system in Nepal. Attempts made in this sphere were set at naught just for restoring traditional authority of the palace. For about forty years, i.e., from 1951 to 1990, the word democracy was used in Nepal only in name but it was hardly put into practice.

In 1959, the palace introduced parliamentary system in Nepal. The palace introduced this system because of the political pressure arising out from different quarters of the country. As this garb too appeared to be a threat to the traditional authority of the palace, this system was torn away on 15th December, 1960 after the experimentation of eighteen months. The result was that the Nepalese people were gripped by the palace tyranny for about thirty years under an another political system known as the Panchayat.

In the initial phase, i.e., during King Tribhuvan's period, much more could have been done for evolving a democratic system in Nepal. But that was not done. The main obstruction in evolving a democratic system appeared from India. India wanted that Nepal may remain as a satellite to her. For this purpose, she used King Tribhuvan as one of her stooges. King Tribhuvan, too, wanted that the traditional authority restored by him may not be curtailed by any party or power. That is why, Nepal could not have an election of the Constituent Assembly for framing a democratic constitution as was promised by King Tribhuvan in his first proclamation on February 18, 1951.

After King Tribhuvan's demise in 1955, the Nepalese politics made a remarkable turning. Nepal began to assert her authority in the comity of nations. Later on, she no longer remained as a satellite to India. But the traditional authority of the palace at that time had been so much on the

increase that the Nepalese people lost even the sight of democracy. This situation lasted in Nepal till the year 1990. This chapter deals with the political development of this period under the leadership of the palace. The political development enlisted in this chapter covers two phases of Nepalese politics. The first phase deals with 'Palace and Democratic Experiments' while the second with 'Palace and Panchayat System.' The first phase covers the Nepalese politics of two kings-- Tribhuvan and Mahendra. And similarly, the second phase too covers the Nepalese politics of two kings-- Mahendra and Birendra. The first phase of Nepalese politics is divided here into two sub-chapters:- (a) 'Nepal as Satellite to India', and (b) 'Assertion of Palace: Extinction of Democracy.' Similarly, the second phase of Nepalese politics also is divided into two parts:- (c) 'Direct Rule under Panchayat System', and (d) 'Over Expansion of Authority and Abolition of Panchayat System.'

(a) NEPAL AS SATELLITE TO INDIA

The period from 1951 to 1960 is a period of democratic experiments in Nepal. During this period, the two kings--Tribhuvan and Mahendra--emerged in the political scenario of Nepal as the two leading personalities. During the period of King Tribhuvan, although he also had made contribution in the ushering of democracy in Nepal, the Nepalese politics had virtually been influenced by India. It was natural for Nepal to be influenced by India because India had helped the Nepalese people to get democracy. King Tribhuvan was very much obliged towards India because it was with the help of her that he could restore his throne. Due to the lack of administrative experience, the king depended much on India which made Nepal almost like a satellite of India. As a result, democracy, in a real sense, could not have a firm root in the soil of Nepalese politics. The democratic experiments made during King Tribhuvan's period are being given here under a separate title 'Nepal as satellite to India.'

Democratic Struggle in Nepal

The end of the second world war brought a tremendous change in most of the nations of the world. The change made an impact in the political scenario of India too. The Indian people carried on a freedom struggle most vigorously against the British empire in India. As a result, the British rule withdrew itself from India--the country known as the fairest jewel in the British crown. The question of the British withdrawal from India did not come automatically. It had carried the history of so many year's freedom fighting. Leaders like Netaji Subash Chandra Bose, Mahatma Gandhi and many others had led the freedom struggle both violently and non-violently. In this freedom fighting, the Nepalese people, particularly the political leaders like Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Man Mohan Adhikari, Tanka Prasad Acharya, Ganga Lal Shrestha and others also had participated.

The success of the freedom movement in India and the declaration of independence of India in 1947 kindled a new ray of hope among the Nepalese

people, particularly the political leaders participating in the Indian freedom fightings. With the help of the Nepalese people, they began to launch democratic movement also in Nepal from the Indian border. And the movement was targeted against the authoritarian rule of Rana prime ministers. As regards the authoritarian rule of Rana prime ministers, the words of Chatterji are:-

"In Nepal's system of polity, the King was a mere figurehead whose writ did not run beyond the palace compound. The hereditary Rana Prime minister ruled and he ruled absolutely. Also, he enjoyed the unheard of privilege of being sole custodian of the State's entire revenue. What this meant to the people of Nepal was nothing but unrewarded toil and unmitigated tyranny. Nepal looked more like a gigantic prison house, where darkness prevailed at noon."¹

The Nepalese people had launched a campaign against the Rana rule even before this. But the launching of this campaign in those days bore no immediate fruit. In 1940, the Nepalese people, under the banner of the *Nepal Praja Parishad*, spearheaded an underground movement. And this movement was unearthed by the Rana government. "Three of them, known to the Nepalese as the 'martyrs', Dasrath Chand, Ganga Lal Shrestha and Dharma Bhakta Mathema, had to pay with life. Many others including Mr. Ganeshman Singh, Ram Hari Sharma, Dharma Ratna Yemi and Pushkar Nath Upreti were awarded long terms."² In this way, the underground efforts of the people were ruthlessly liquidated.

In the year 1950, the Rana government faced a very serious uprising. "led by the Nepali Congress, the Nepalese people rose to assert their right because they wanted to have a place in the sun. The Nepalese people came from the streaming swamps of the Terai and from the dizzy heights of the Himalayas. They were on the errand to fix their date with destiny."³ The flight of King Tribhuvan to India added extra strength to the people's uprising. As a result, "the Nepalese peoples' subdued voice of protest against the age-old rule of exploitation rose to a crescendo."⁴ And in this fighting

"The rebels captured Jhapa, another town in eastern Nepal, on 13th December. And by 13 December they had captured Bhojpur, Chainpur, Dingla and Khotang. It would be no exaggeration to say that, by the third week of December, the Nepali Congress had quite an extensive stretch of territory, almost about 30,000 miles, under its armed control."⁵

¹ Bhola Chatterji, *A Study of Recent Nepalese Politics*, (Calcutta: The World Press Private Ltd., 1967), p.4

² Tribhuvan Nath, *The Nepalese Dilemma 1960-74*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1975), p.157

³ Chatterji, f.n. No. 1, p. 4.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 127.

The fighting came to a haltage without being completed. Under the pressure of the Indian government, the three parties--King Tribhuvan, the Nepali Congress leaders and the Rana rulers--came to an agreement. Entering into an agreement known as Delhi Pact, King Tribhuvan returned to Nepal on 15th February, 1951 and proclaimed democracy on 18th February, 1951.

Tripartite Agreement and Dawn of Democracy

The political history of present Nepal has its beginning with the dawn of democracy in 1951. In this year, Nepal, "a sealed country to all outside world"⁶ entered upon the stage of world politics. The Rana oligarchy, which had been ruling the nation since about a century had its fall. A Tripartite Agreement signed among the King, the Rana rulers and the Nepali Congress leaders decided the future government of Nepal. The purpose of this agreement was

".. to call an elected constituent assembly, form an interim government consisting of popular representatives and restore King Tribhuvan to the throne. Talks continued for two months after which King Tribhuvan was accepted as an effective sovereign committed to a constitutional monarchy. Immediate formation of an interim Cabinet on the basis of parity between the Ranas and popular representatives and elections by 1952 were also agreed."⁷

The prominent features of this agreement were:-

- I. To declare the Panja-Patra of April 1948 vesting Maharaja Mohan Shamsher all plenary power null and void;
- II. All plenary powers to revert back to King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah Dev;
- III. To constitute a Cabinet of ten ministers--five to be nominated by Maharaja Mohan Shamsher and the other five to be nominated by the Nepali Congress High Command;
- IV. The coalition Cabinet to be headed by Maharaja Mohan Shamsher and to be collectively responsible to His Majesty King Tribhuvan;
- V. The country is to be governed by the provisions of an Interim Constitution to be granted by His Majesty and the Interim Constitution will be in force till the promulgation of a Constitution of Nepal framed by a Constituent Assembly elected by the people of Nepal under adult franchise."⁸

In the initial phase, i.e. December, 1950, an agreement was proposed

⁶ Poorna Bahadur M.A., *Foreigners' Eyes and Attitudes on Nepal*, (Kathmandu: Nepal Youth League, 1959), p. 4

⁷ Narendra Goyal, *Political History of Himalayan States*, (New Delhi: Cambridge Book and Stationary Stores, 1964), p. 42

⁸ Daman Raj Tuladhar, *Contemporary Nepal (1945-1955)* (Kathmandu: Laxmi Publications, 1980), p. 25

due to the efforts of the Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru to eliminate the Rana oligarchy from the country and to bring effective transfer of power to the people of Nepal. The agreement did not serve the interests of the Rana rulers as well as of the Nepali Congress. The Rana rulers found in it the plan to eliminate their own century-old rule while the Nepali Congress, a strategy to reinstate Prime Minister Mohan Shamsar again as the first prime minister of democratic government. It was because of that reason, both of these parties-- the Nepali Congress and the Rana rulers-- had, in the beginning, rejected the memorandum of the agreement, i.e., memorandum of December 9, 1950. But both of these parties were compelled to accept this memorandum under the pressure of the Indian government and the result was the Tripartite Agreement in New Delhi. In the words of Goyal

"The above settlement was rejected by all the political parties of Nepal as failing short of a complete transfer of power to the people. So the negotiations dragged on for another month between the representatives of the Nepali Congress and Rana Government, in the presence of the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, King Tribhuvan and the Indian Prime Minister. Ultimately, the Nepali Congress was persuaded to call off its operation and share fifty fifty power with the Ranas in an Interim Government."⁹

Thus the democracy introduced in Nepal in 1951 was proved to be a gift from the Indian government and similarly the revolution which helped to bring democracy in Nepal to be "the partial revolution as some scholars have rightly described."¹⁰

Coalition Government and its Nature

After signing on the Tripartite Agreement in New Delhi, King Tribhuvan returned to Kathmandu on 15th February, 1951. Three days later or on 18th February, 1951, he announced the formation of an interim government. The interim government was composed of two groups,--the Rana rulers and the Nepali Congress leaders. It was a coalition government headed by Prime Minister Mohan Shamsar, the last prime minister of Rana oligarchy. While forming this government,

"King Tribhuvan stipulated explicitly that the ministers, including the Prime Minister, would hold office during his pleasure and would be collectively responsible to him for their actions. This constituted a drastic change in the status of the Prime Minister, which during Rana had become symbolic with the *de facto* rule of the family oligarchy, whose senior most member had been a hereditary Prime Minister."¹¹

⁹ Goyal, f.n. No. 57 p. 43

¹⁰ S.D. Muni (ed.), *An Assertive Monarchy*, (New Delhi: Chetana Publications, 1977), p. 7

¹¹ Kusum Shrestha, *Monarchy in Nepal* (Tribhuvan Era), (Bombay: Popular Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 1984), p. 152

The new government was given a formal or institutional shape by enacting the Interim Government of Nepal Act, 2007 on 30th March, 1951. This act which was commonly known as the Interim Constitution vested all the executive, legislative and judicial powers in the King. His supremacy over the Prime Minister also was clearly laid down in this act. The act also laid down that the Council of Ministers would be collectively responsible to the King.

The interim government announced by King Tribhuvan was a government of heterogenous character. It was a government composed of two contradictory forces, the Rana group representing tradition and authority, and the Nepali Congress leaders representing modernisation and revolution. As these groups were vehemently opposed to each other, it was but natural that an incessant confrontation arose between these two groups. The result of the confrontation helped the palace to restore and consolidate its traditional authority, the authority which it had lost after the rise of Jang Bahadur in 1846.

Power Struggle and Fall of Coalition Government

The coalition government announced by King Tribhuvan could not survive for a long period. Manifold are the causes attributed for the failure of the government. The first cause was that Prime Minister Mohan Shamsher was a staunch conservative, not capable of changing his role in tune with time. His political background also was incompatible with the new role for establishing political democracy in the country. To add to that, Nripa Jang Rana and Chudaraj Shamsher Rana, the ministers from Rana group in the interim government, also did not support the prime minister.

The other factors responsible for the failure of this government was that the Nepali Congress group had taken the coalition government simply as a temporary truce. Since the beginning of its formation, it was committed to belittle and overthrow the Rana group from the interim government. That is why, from the very beginning, i.e., from the time of swearing in ceremony of the interim government, there had been a power struggle between these two groups in regard to their position. Joshi and Rose trace a picture of clash between these two parties at the time of swearing in ceremony with the words:-

"The first clash between the Rana and the Nepali Congress blocs occurred over the question of precedence in the seating arrangements at the swearing in ceremony on February 18, when B.P. Koirala, as head of the Nepali Congress group, insisted that he be seated next to the Prime Minister. Significantly, each group used separate flags, the one flying the Nepali Congress flag and the other the traditional Rana flag."¹²

¹² Bhuwan Lal Joshi and Leo E. Rose, *Democratic Innovations in Nepal*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 87

The uneasy relationship between these two groups deteriorated furthermore when the power struggle between them gave rise to a mild violence. It once happened that a militant group, known as the Gorkha Dal organized by a group of Ranas, made an attempt to assault the Nepali Congress leader or Home Minister B.P. Koirala. The Nepali Congress requested King Tribhuvan's intervention in that matter. The Ranas, on the other hand, sought the mediation of the Indian government. Hence both of these parties went to New Delhi for settling the dispute. The response of New Delhi was in favour of the Ranas and, that is why, the Nepali Congress leaders had to work together with the Ranas in the coalition government. But the response of New Delhi too did not remain effective for a long time. Depicting a picture of crisis in the Rana-Nepali Congress relations, Muni comments that

"How naive this hope was became evident when a crisis in the Rana-Nepali Congress relations within the Council of Ministers reappeared in November 1951. B.P. Koirala and his colleagues resigned from the coalition government, forcing the Prime Minister, Mohan Shamshere, to resign. The King announced the formation of a new government on 16 November 1951, in which there was no remnant, at least formal, of the Rana system."¹³

Formation of Nepali Congress Government

After the failure of the Rana-Congress coalition government, King Tribhuvan announced an another government on 16th November, 1951. It was the first government in Nepal headed by a commoner prime minister, Matrika Prasad Koirala. Although being the government of single political party, the Nepali Congress, it incorporated within itself people from different areas of the country representing diverse ethnic groups. Thus the new government was, in a way, given national outlook. Among the so many ministers incorporated in the cabinet, Bhadra Kali Misra and Bhagabati Prasad Singh represented the Hindi-speaking Tarai area, whearas Ganesh Man Singh and Dharma Ratna Yami, the Newar community of Kathmandu respectively. Nara Bahadur Gurung, on the other hand, represented the Gurung community of the western hills and also of the ex-servicemen of the Gorkha regiments in the British and Indian Gorkha armies. Similarly, Narad Muni Thulung represented the Limbu community of the eastern hill area. The other point to be noted in regard to the cabinet was that the cabinet was relatively free from Rana obstructionism as in the past. The new cabinet, in a way, was a test of the Nepali leaders' capacity to operate in a true coalition of national interests. Setting aside their personal and ethnic interests, they were made to share a common political consensus.

¹³ Muni, f.n. No. 10, pp. 7-8

Difficulties Faced by Nepali Congress Government

The new government was made to face difficulties since the initial days of its existence. The main reasons which made the government to face such difficulties were (a) Intra- Party differences, and (b) Law and Order Problems.

a) Intra-Party Differences:- The new government was made to face difficulties since the beginning of its existence. The Nepali Congress Working Committee had proposed King Tribhuvan to appoint Bishweshwar Prasad (B.P.) Koirala to the post of prime minister in the new government. But this voice of the Congress Working Committee was ignored by King Tribhuvan. He appointed Matrika Prasad Koirala as the prime minister of the new government in lieu of B.P. Koirala. That is why, "at a political conference in December 1951, B.P. Koirala's followers even made the allegation that it was on the advice of the Indian Ambassador in Nepal that the king had kept B.P. Koirala out of Ministry."¹⁴ Later on, a strong section of the Nepali Congress demanded that the post of the prime minister be separated from the post of the party president. And the demand of the Nepali Congress Party was fulfilled in January 1952 when Matrika Prasad Koirala withdrew his candidature as the party president in Janakpur conference at the request of the Indian Socialist leader, Jaya Prakash Narayan.

b) Law and Order Problem:- The government of Matrika Prasad Koirala did not succeed even after the patching up of the intra-party differences. It was during his prime ministership, the country faced the problem of law and order on all around. Lack of co-ordination between the central and district administrations aggravated the problem of law and order. In the words of Gupta

"In the Terai, dacoites and murders took place in broad day-light, while further east in the Kiranti country the authority of the Centre completely ceased to exist. The situation in the districts of Gorkha and Pokhara grew particularly alarming. As if to add to these difficulties, the value of the Nepali currency went down dangerously which hit hard the interests of the business community. Finally, among the 8,000 men of Raksha Dal which had been built up as a para-military force, unrest reached a breaking point. For a long period these men had waited for a final settlement regarding the regularisation of their service and salary, but the fall of the Coalition and particularly B.P. Koirala's expulsion from the Ministry who had taken measures at personal risk to reorganise them, dealt hard blows of disillusionment for them."¹⁵

The situation in the country furthermore deteriorated when the extremist political elements tried to enhance their influence exploiting the

¹⁴ Anirudha Gupta, *Politics in Nepal 1950-60*, (Delhi: Kalinga Publications, 1993), p. 67.
¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68

opportunity. The *Gorkha Dal*, under the new name the Gorkha Parishad, fanned unrest in the districts around Kathmandu. The Communists also were active particularly among the student community in Kathmandu, the workers in Biratnagar and landless agriculture workers in the Terai. The situation became further tense as and when two leaders of the separatist Kiranti movement,--Achyut Prasad Kharel and Ram Prasad Rai,-- were arrested. These leaders who had been in command of the eastern wing of the *Raksha Dal* were lodged with Dr. K.I. Singh in prison. On the night of January 22-23, 1952, K.I. Singh managed to escape from the prison. After his escape he launched an attack with the help of 1200 *Raksha Dal* men. He seized Singh Durbar, the treasury, the arsenal, the airport and the broadcasting station, and disrupted telegraphic communication with India too. Later on, he presented a five point programme to King Tribhuvan for negotiations. But the state army, at that time, was able to dislodge the rebels from all vantage after some reserves. This made Dr. K.I. Singh to flee to Tibet *en route* to China with thirty-seven of his trusted comrades. And the result was that King Tribhuvan was compelled to declare a state of emergency in the country and arm M.P. Koirala with emergency powers. In this context, the *Akhil Nepal Rashtriya Mahasabha* headed by Achyut Prasad Kharel and Ram Prasad Rai was banned. Similarly, the Nepal Communist Party, which had asked the people to support K.I. Singh's revolt, was also banned on January 27. Though the government succeeded in restoring peace, the incident damaged the prestige of the government seriously. As regards the banning of these parties, Devakotta quotes:

" The Nepal Government has declared the *Akhil Nepal Rastriya Mahasabha* to be unconstitutional. This association has been banned because of its affiliation with the incident perpetrated in the capital on Magha 8. In this context, the Home Ministry has outlawed even the Nepal Communist Party."¹⁶

Exit of M.P. Koirala Government

As the situation of the country deteriorated day by day, it was but natural that the Nepali Congress Party felt disgusted with the M.P. Koirala government. The deteriorating situation damaged the image not merely of the M.P. Koirala government but equally of the Nepali Congress Party. It was because of this reason, the working committee of the Nepali Congress, on 21st July, 1952, directed the prime minister and his government to tender resignation from his office which the prime minister and his group did not comply with. Hence the working committee expelled them from the active membership of the party for a year. That step of the Congress Working Committee was later ratified by the All Nepal Congress Committee while meeting in August 1952. As regards the undemocratic norms pursued on by

¹⁶ Grishma Bahadur Devakotta, *Nepalko Rajnitik Darpan*, (Kathmandu: Keshab Chandra Gautam, 2016 V.E.), p. 108

King Tribhuvan and Prime Minister M.P. Koirala, the words of Chauhan are:-

"According to democratic norms, M.P. Koirala should have resigned on his own after having lost confidence of his party. And if he had preferred unashamedly to stay on in office, the king should have dissolved the ministry. None of these two alternatives materialised, thus causing considerable harm to the cause of democracy in the country. Tribhuvan's reluctance to dismiss M.P. Koirala was, however, understandable, since he had personal liking for the man. Or perhaps he might have also entertained the illusion that M.P. Koirala would still manage to win over a majority in his party. Or the king was deliberately acting in the manner he did to expose the incompetence and worthlessness of the politicians and democratic institutions in order to pave way for his own aggrandisement of power."¹⁷

M.P. Koirala did not take much time to realize his mistake. His continuance in the office of the prime minister without the support of his party had brought to him only the popular contempt. So he tendered his resignation on 6th August, 1952 which the King accepted on 10th August. With this event, the rule of the Nepali Congress ended leaving an impression to the people that the first government by the Nepali Congress was inefficient.

Royal Councilors' Government and its Termination

After the exit of the M.P. Koirala government, King Tribhuvan desired to administer himself the country with the assistance of an advisory council. So he announced the formation of a Royal Councillors' government. As there was no provision for such a council in the Interim Government Act of 1951, he promulgated a Special Circumstances Act on 9th September, 1952. And this act suspended all the clauses of the Interim Government Act dealing with cabinet and its functions. This act vested all the executive powers in the King and the original concept of the King-in-Council was nullified for temporary period. Thus the Special Circumstances Act provided legal foundation for the Royal Councilors' regime. In the meantime it also helped to introduce the King's absolute authority in the country's political affairs.

The Royal Councillors' government proclaimed by King Tribhuvan remained simply as an instrument to the King's will. The government did not have any solid ideology or programme of its own. So it did not also have to suffer any internal dissension within the board. However the government was made to face setbacks because of King Tribhuvan's severe illness. So King Tribhuvan wanted that the party government be established at the earliest. He

¹⁷ R.S.Chauhan, *The political Development in Nepal 1950-70*, (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1971), p. 68

initiated dialogues with the leaders of diverse political parties. The dialogues did not bear any tangible result because of the King's ardent wish to reappoint M.P. Koirala as the prime minister of Nepal in lieu of B.P. Koirala who was more assertive than his half brother. Moreover he was more close to the Socialist Party of India than to the Indian National Congress affiliated with Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru. It was because of such reason and also because of its failure to bring about any of the reformatory measures, the Councillors' government was made a target by almost all the political parties. The greatest protest came from M.P. Koirala who was once a very strong supporter of the government. The M.P. Koirala fraction of Nepali Congress formed a new political party under the name *Rastriya Praja Party*. In an inaugural address on 30th April, 1953, M.P. Koirala, the president of the party, said that the King has become helpless to stop deteriorating situation without a popular Cabinet. In the mean time he also urged the King to institute a popular Cabinet immediately. Taking all these facts into consideration, King Tribhuvan terminated the Royal Councilors' Government on 15th June, 1953.

After terminating the Royal Councilors' government, the king proclaimed the government of the newly organized National Democratic Party under the prime ministership of its president, M.P. Koirala. It was a government composed of the smallest party in the country. While constituting the government, King Tribhuvan had bypassed the largest party of the country, i.e., the Nepali Congress. The step of the King encouraged the leaders of other minor parties to seek the favour of the King. From that period onwards "politics of service and sacrifice yielded ground to court politics which depended mainly on '*Chakari*' (a Nepali term denoting unpaid sycophancy), backbiting, intrigue and court favour. Barring honourable exceptions, leaders of political parties lost contact with the masses; their 'revolutionary' fervour was ebbing."¹⁸

As the government was constituted more on individual basis rather than on party line, the prime minister was bound to depend more on the King than on the people. The new government also appeared simply as the King's advisory council although it had been given the outlook of a party government. As the prime minister lacked popular support, the government depended more on the King for its sustenance. Such situation reduced the position of the government to a tool in the hands of the King. The prime minister asked other parties and groups to join his cabinet but not a single party or group came forward. King Tribhuvan left Kathmandu on September, 1953 for medical treatment. While leaving Nepal, he appointed a Regency Council which was empowered to guide the Cabinet in its day to day business. The M.P. Koirala Government, thus, was reduced to the position of an instrument to carry on the wishes of the royal authority.

¹⁸ Nath, f.n. No. 2, p. 23

Problems Faced by National Democratic Party Government

The selection of the minor party for the formation of the government caused a great dissatisfaction among all other parties. On 21st June, 1953, the Nepali Congress adopted a resolution warning that the nation "must be prepared for a most unpopular regime in Nepal. Even the Rightist Rana dominated Gorkha Parishad condemned the Government as a government of free booters, and among other parties, the Nepal Praja Parishad and the Nepal Rastriya Parishad (D.R. Regmi group) refused to join the Cabinet."¹⁹

During the functioning of this government, unrest began to prevail in the western Tarai. Later on it took the shape of wide spread lawlessness. On the Indo-Nepalese border at Dhangadi, about 700 armed men led by Bhim Dutt Pant, the follower of K.I. Singh, began to spread reign of terror. At that time, the government found itself unable in controlling the situation. So it asked military assistance of India for suppressing the rebels. As a result a joint operation by Indo-Nepalese troops rounded up about 270 people. Bhim Dutt, however, escaped from the scene and began to hide in the forest. On 23rd August he was also killed in an accidental gunfight near Dadeldhura district.

The appearance of the Indian troops created adverse reaction in Nepal. Almost all the political parties outside the government condemned the government and intensified anti-India campaign. As a result, the government's party, out of 18 seats, could not win even a single seat in the election of Kathmandu Municipality held on 2nd September, 1952. Highlighting on the outcome of election results, the *Nepal Trade Directory* writes:-

"The Communist Party gained 5 seats, Nepal Praja Parishad and Nepali Congress four each, the Gurkha Parishad one and the Independents four. The ruling party-- National Democratic Party-- failed to secure even a single seat. The Communist Party polled more than fifty percent of the total cast votes."²⁰

Formation of League of Democrats and its Ending

The defeat of the Rastriya Praja Party in the local election was taken by the opposition parties as a vote of no-confidence to the government. The prime minister did not accept this view. He sought the participation of other parties in his cabinet. The attempt did not succeed. On the other hand, it was made to face vehement protest when the government arrested B.P. Koirala on 21st September, 1953 and served an internment order on him. The Nepali Congress formed a united front with the collaboration of other parties like the Praja Parishad and the Rashtriya Congress. Under the name of League of Democrats, the three parties issued a joint manifesto and demanded that the M.P. Koirala Ministry should be replaced by a coalition of democratic parties. It also asked for a joint parliamentary board to conduct the Government.

¹⁹ Gupta, f.n. No. 14, p. 80

²⁰ *Nepal Trade Directory*. (New Delhi: Nepal Trading Corporation, 1959), p. 30

The League of Democrats was not a sincerely motivated group committed to fight against the undemocratic nature of the government. It was just a group of opposition parties carrying on pressure tactics in order to bargain for cabinet posts. Prime Minister M.P. Koirala also was aware of the motive behind the congregation of these opposition parties. So he carried on separate talks with them. He reached into an agreement with one of the constituent parties, the Nepali Congress. On 16th October, he publicly offered four cabinet seats to that party. In response to the offer, the working committee of the Nepali Congress sanctioned four names--B.P. Koirala, Subarna Shamsher Rana, Surya Prasad Upadhyaya and Bhagwati Prasad Singh. While taking the unilateral decision, the Nepali Congress did not consult with other parties of the League. It made the Rashtriya Congress and the Praja Parishad quit the league with bitterness towards the Nepali Congress. Thus the unceremonious ending of the league shows to what extent the personal jealousies, narrow self-interest and opportunism dominated the Nepalese politics. These factors helped the ruler to fragment the political groups. Such tendency encouraged the men in power to exploit the situation and the palace became more and more powerful.

Setback of Democratic Trend

The democratic trend in Nepal furthermore suffered because of the unpolitical and undemocratic nature of the government. In November, 1953, the *Pradhan Nyalaya* (Supreme Court) listened to the appeal of B.P. Koirala against the internment order passed by the government. The court declared the internment order as unconstitutional and ordered the release of B.P. Koirala. Instead of taking it as a precedent, the government advised the King to take away all the powers of the judiciary which could be used against the decisions of the government or executive. And the result was the royal proclamation of 13th November, 1953 which upheld the King's supreme legislative, executive and judicial authority. In regard to the proclamation, the commentaries made by Chauhan runs as:-

"It declared that the powers exercised by the ministers or the government servants in accordance with the rules and regulations promulgated by the King under his authority shall not be subject to question in any court. It took away the powers of the *Pradhan Nyalaya* Act. The *Pradhan Nyalaya* also lost its position as the highest court of justice in the country. It did not remain the court of record and lost the powers of such a court including the power to punish the contempt of its own authority."²¹

In order to give the Royal Proclamation a practical shape, the constitution or the Interim Government Act was amended. The amendment curtailed almost all the powers of judiciary which could threaten the powers to the executive. The M.P. Koirala government thus enabled the King to

²¹ Chauhan, f.n. No. 17, p. 67

abrogate executive, legislative and judicial powers. The King became the supreme authority without any check on the exercise of his power. Taking all these factors into account Chauhan further adds

"Smarting under the concept of traditional authority and divine right to rule, the King completely threw overboard his pretensions about democracy and democratic institutions, when on February 13, 1954, he boasted 'The inherent sovereignty of the Monarch and his special prerogatives over the executive, legislative and judicial wings as the supreme head have been handed over to us by the tradition and custom of the country. For sometime these prerogatives of the Monarch were exercised by the Prime Ministers by virtue of the rights vested in them by our illustrious forefathers. Since those rights were ended by the Proclamation of February 18, 1951, the supreme authority in all affairs now rests in us.'"²²

Pradhan too expresses a similar view with the words:-

"The amendment eliminated the words 'the Pradhan Nyayala will remain as the highest (supreme) court.' In lieu of them, the words 'there will also be a Pradhan Nyayalaya' were added.....The final judicial authority of the court was taken over by the King eliminating in this way the judicial supremacy of the court from the Interim Government Act. Thus the Pradhan Nyayalaya was made defunct."²³

Expansion of Cabinet

After the amendment of constitution, the King reconstituted the government of Rastriya Praja Party on 16th February, 1954. The government was thus expanded with a view to incorporate some representatives of other minor or insignificant parties--the Nepal National Congress and the All Nepal Jana Congress and the Praja Parishad. The representatives not incorporated in the government were the members of the largest parties of the country--the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal-- although the members of the government were selected on the basis of individual capacity. The Communist Party of Nepal was still under a ban. In the 106 member Advisory Assembly constituted to familiarise with parliamentary procedure, the Nepali Congress was allocated only eleven seats whereas M.P. Koirala's Rastriya Praja Party was provided forty five. The appointment of a National Cabinet was criticised both by the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal. "The politburo of the outlawed CPN warned in a statement that the new Cabinet will pave way for military dictatorship of the king and meet demands of the people with brutal repression."²⁴ They refused to accept it as the National Government.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 68

²³ Mukti Pradhan, "Nepalko Baidhanik Itihasma Rajtantra", *Prajyic Jhilko*, (Kathmandu: Winter 1992-93), p. 53

²⁴ Nath, f.n. No. 2, p. 115

Fall of National Government

The opposition parties started becoming vocal day by day. They began to adopt agitational methods too. On 28th March, 1954, the Nepali Congress Party observed the Black Day for restoring the powers of the Pradhan Nyayalaya which the Royal Proclamations of 10th January, 1954 had curtailed. Other political parties too joined the fray. They demanded that civil liberties and rights of the judiciary be restored in the country. The Nepali Congress launched a civil disobedience movement for the fulfilment of six demands, i.e., (1) establishment of the law and order; (2) protection of civil liberty and formation of an independent judiciary; (3) holding general election; (4) disbursement of rice and other food grains; (5) stabilisation of currency; and (6) preservation of national territorial integrity.

Two days later, Crown Prince Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah, Chairman of Regency Council, communicated that the demands of civil disobedience movement were reasonable and that he would initiate necessary steps to comply with the demands. The Nepali Congress hailed the message as the *Magna Carta* and suspended their movement. Prime Minister M.P. Koirala took the message as a no-confidence motion of behalf of the Regency Council. So, on 31st January, 1955, he tendered his resignation from the government. The Regency Council possessed no authority to accept the resignation. So Crown Prince Mahendra went to Europe to meet his ailing father Tribhuvan. After returning from there, he, on 18th February, 1955, proclaimed the order of his father, the order which vested in him all the royal authorities.

Following the proclamation, he dissolved the Regency Council and, as a first step, took direct control of the Department of Anti-corruption, the Central Intelligence Bureau and the Department of Records. Pursuing the character of a straight forward person, he declared over Nepal Radio that

"It has been now almost four years since the inception of democracy in our country. But we have to search and research to find even four achievements to our credit in the meantime. It is really a matter of great pity. Should we say that democracy is in a state of infancy, evil propensities like selfishness, greed and envy are very much noticeable in it which are unnatural for an infant. Should we say that it has already grown up, it is rather unfortunate that symptoms of growth are noticeable nowhere,— a fact which is not hidden from my countrymen."²⁵

Expressing his views like this, he accepted the resignation of M.P. Koirala on 2nd March, 1955, dissolved the government and began to rule directly. And with King Tribhuvan's demise on 13th March, 1955, the chapter of Nepalese politics of Tribhuvan period ends.

²⁵ H.M. King Mahendra, *Proclamations, Speeches and Messages*, Vol. I, Part One, (Kathmandu: Department of Publicity, 1967), pp.31-32

Negative Aspect of Nepalese Politics

The Tribhuvan period occupies a very significant place in the political history of Nepal. Although it represents only a very short span of time, i.e., from the dawn of democracy on 18th February, 1951 to the demise of King Tribhuvan on 13th March, 1955, this period is significant for some of the epoch making achievements. It was in this period, the country got an Interim Constitution in which the ideals of a constitutional monarch and a cabinet form of government were imbedded. It laid down the basis for a new political order where party politics reigned supreme. The country was given the independent judiciary for the first time. A modern administrative system, no longer the monopoly of privileged families, was also introduced. Every candidate irrespective of caste, religion, sex etc. was permitted to enter and to get promotion in the military as well as administrative service. The government accepted the abolition of Birta land at least in principle and thus tried to eradicate the feudal order. The forests were brought under the government's control and many degrading feudal social and administrative practices were eliminated.

Despite all these records, this period is commented as a dark period in Nepalese politics. The reason is that during this period Nepal was virtually said to lose its independence and become a satellite to India. As King Tribhuvan restored his throne with the help of India, he became just like a stooge to the Indian government. This event led Nepal to remain in the position of a satellite to India. King Tribhuvan's own words in regard to his own position are:-

"The moment I landed in the Palam airport I knew how matters stood (Pause). I became a pawn at the hands of the Indian Prime Minister (Pause). I was segregated from all contact with the leaders of the Nepali Congress (Pause). Now I am back home. I have brought with me one Indian gentleman to work as my Private Secretary and two Officers of the Indian Army to look after my security. They are special gifts of Shri Nehru which I could not have the heart to reject. I forsee many more such gifts to come. I am no more under the bondage of the Rana Prime Ministers. But am I free yet? Am I not under the tutelage of the Indian Prime Minister? (Long Pause). Look at the Congress Ministers,-- they are taking all their troubles in the drawing-room of the Indian Ambassador. When things get rather hot for them they would not mind making a trip to New Delhi to seek the guidance, succour and what not of the Indian Prime Minister. To tell you the truth,--the Indian Prime Minister had done me quite a good turn. When the British government brought such pressure on him to recognize the boy King, he would choose to walk out of the British Commonwealth rather than toe the

British line of action. For this act of friendship I shall remain always beholden to him."²⁶

Before the dawn of democracy in Nepal, King Tribhuvan had taken asylum in the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu to restore his power which the crown had lost with the rise of Jang Bahadur in 1846. He was also aware of the fact that after the withdrawal of the British empire from India he could save the palace only with the blessings of India. Otherwise it was sure that activities like the merging of Hyderabad by India in 1947 and of Tibet by China in 1950 would make extinction not merely of the nation but equally of the palace. Moreover, it was not an impossible fact that India would merge Nepal within her territory as had once been proposed by Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister as well as the strongest man of the then Indian politics. To quote the supreme leader Ganesh Man Singh "Nepal was a vital country for India. That is why, a voice was raised at that time (2007 V.E.) for merging Nepal within India. It was not a voice raised by an ordinary person. Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel had presented this proposal."²⁷ Perhaps King Tribhuvan also had in his mind how King Hari Singh had conceded his own kingdom Kashmir to India after India had won the independence.

After the ushering of democracy, King Tribhuvan seems to appoint Mohan Shamsher Rana as the first prime minister of the democratic Nepal although the same prime minister had dethroned him. King Tribhuvan was compelled to do so under the pressure of the Indian government. Mohan Shamsher, the last prime minister of the Rana oligarchy, had solicited India's support to disperse the political struggle surging from India after the withdrawal of the British empire from there. Similarly, by entering into the treaty of 1950, Mohan Shamsher had conceded special authority to India over Nepal in order to win favour from the Indian government. It was because of this reason, the Indian government had forced King Tribhuvan and the Nepali Congress to sign on the Delhi Pact and to reappoint Mohan Shamsher as the prime minister.

Encroachment upon Nepalese Politics

The Nepalese politics during King Tribhuvan's reign was much interfered by India. The Indian ambassador Chandreshwar Parsad Narayan (C.P.N.) Singh not merely attended Nepal's cabinet meetings but equally decided its policy matters. It was under his pressure, the prime ministers of Nepal were selected and appointed. Thus the prime ministers were made to rise and fall under the pressure of the Indian government. The trend continued up to the initial phase of King Mahendra's period. As regards the encroaching trend of India, the words of former Prime Minister Tanka Prasad Acharya are:-

²⁶ Tuladhar, f.n. No. 8, p. 319
²⁷ Kailash Pradhan, "Ganeshmanko Bhanai Sandarvama", *Nepal Jagaran Weekly*, (Kathmandu) July 4, 1994

"To the post of Chief Secretary to King Tribhuvan, the Indian ICS officer, Govinda Narayan Singh, was appointed. The Indian Military Mission and the Indian Military Posts were functioning respectively at Kathmandu and at the Nepalese border to China since 2010 V.E. The Military Mission, which the Matrika government permitted to enter, is said to have come to reorganise and train the Nepalese military. In the cabinet meetings of Nepal, the Indian Ambassador was invited. By requesting the King, Sandai (Tanka Prasad Acharya) had stopped this tradition. There was also a trend that the prime minister of Nepal would attend the meetings of the Military Mission at Jawalakhel called on by the Indian General Nagesh. Sandai had requested the King on the telephone that he would not be going to a meeting like this. If Your Majesty permits me, I will make the Defense Secretary to attend the meeting. And to this request, King Mahendra replied okay. It was under the Indian pressure, his cabinet had been dissolved after the existence of 18 months. King Mahendra related to him how he was compelled to do so."²⁸

India was taking a big brotherly attitude towards Nepal even before Nepal's attainment of democracy. She had asserted her authority over Nepal as and when she thought it necessary. At a certain time when King Tribhuvan took asylum in India, the Indian government, Prime Minister Nehru specially, received him with due honour, the honour which the head of a sovereign state was entitled. At that time, Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru had clearly expressed on the authority of India over Nepal. In the words of Husain and Anwar "In an unusual way, Mr. Nehru stated Indian Government's policy towards Nepal implying that Nepal must remain within India's influence. And in order to guarantee this, there should be a government in Nepal that must be friendly to India."²⁹

It was because of that big brotherly attitude towards Nepal, India forced King Tribhuvan, the Rana rulers and the Nepali Congress leaders to sign a Tripartite Pact in New Delhi. And the result was the formation of a coalition government under the prime ministership of Mohan Shamsheer Rana. The Nepali Congress leaders felt that the coalition government imposed upon them by the Indian government would not run without the patronage and guidance from India. They got disappointed and left the government making the Rana-Nepali Congress coalition to fall.

After the failure of the Rana- Congress coalition government, the King appointed M.P. Koirala as the first commoner prime minister in a very surprising manner. In appointing him as the prime minister, the King ignored the proposal of the working committee of the Nepali Congress--the largest political party of the country-- that B.P. Koirala be appointed to the post of

²⁸ Quoted in Govinda Prasad Lohani "Ganeshmanle Dekhaeko Upekshya Sandarvama", *Samakalin Weekly*, (Kathmandu) December 17, 1994

²⁹ Asad Husain and Asifa Anwar, *Conflict in Asia : A Case Study of Nepal*, (New Delhi: Classical Publications, 1979, p. 14

the prime minister. As regards the cause of ignoring this proposal of the Nepali Congress, the words of Hussain and Anwar are:-

"B.P. Koirala who had his political training in India, had organised his political party and led the revolt against the Ranas. His organizing capacity, political views and following among politically conscious elements in Nepal was well known to the Indian leadership. Building up of an individual into a national hero was a challenge to India's leadership and dominant position, and probably did not suit the type of set-up which Nehru had visualized for Nepal."³⁰

And as regards the Indian stranglehold in Nepal, Tuladhar depicts the then picture with the words:-

"In the Counselors' regime, the Nehru government of India had still firmer stranglehold on the independent status of the kingdom of Nepal. Shri Govind Narayan ICS was posted at the Royal Palace as Principal Secretary to His Majesty with widest supervisory powers. Buch (Administrative) Commission and Anand (Police) Commission were foisted on the government of Nepal. The cabinet decisions recorded on two-inch wide strips of typescript in English created wide confusion all around. Important correspondence in the Foreign Office were dictated by the junior officers of the Indian Embassy, RN Shukul (Additional Secretary) and PN Ojha (Third Secretary). The men in the Indian Military Mission went masquerading as members of an occupation army. At Thankot an under-aged girl was raped by six men of the Indian Military Mission. The entire city of Kathmandu was roused to the highest pitch of frenzy at such national indignity. But Shri Khadga Man Singh, the Counselor for Foreign Affairs was made to sign a letter to the Indian Ambassador dictated by the Embassy officers apolizing for the 'embarrassment caused by the licentious behavior of a depraved woman.' For Mother Nepal the cup of humiliation was being filled to the brim. King Tribhuvan whose gout had been licking at the joints, was feeling that it had already started biting at his heart."³¹

The appointment of M.P. Koirala to the post of prime minister left a wrong impression in Nepalese politics. The Nepali Congress Party took the step as an outcome designed by India. Hence, this party accused India of interfering into Nepal's internal affairs. The other political parties too joined the fray and began to raise voice against India. Commenting on the voice raised against India Joshi and Rose write:-

"The attacks on the Prime Minister were extended to include also those leaders who were considered to be the main supporters (and manipulators) of the Cabinet, primarily ambassador C.P.N. Singh

³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 14-15

³¹ Tuladhar, f.n. No. 8 p. 319

and Prime Minister Nehru of India, and King Tribhuvan... On December 5, for instance, B.P. Koirala accused C.P.N. Singh of exceeding his authority by meddling in the internal politics of Nepal. The Indian Ambassador was charged with fomenting rivalries among Nepali political leaders and, by implication, was held responsible for the exclusion of B.P. Koirala from the prime ministership. Other political parties, such as the Nepali National Congress and the United Front, were understandably delighted to receive this support for their allegations that Ambassador Singh was the creator and the perserver of M.P. Koirala government. But they, unlike the Nepali Congress, attributed expansionist motives to the Indian government and interpreted Singh's activities as part of a conspiracy for gradual annexation of Nepal."³²

Husain and Anwar also entertain the same feeling. while writhing the words:-

"The anti-Indian feelings started shaping up when King Tribhuvan, allegedly on the advice of the Government of India, picked M.P. Koirala in 1951 as the Prime Minister of Nepal to head the King's Government in the initial stages of the formation of a democratic government instead of B. P. Koirala who was considered among the Nepali Congress leaders as the real leader of the Nepali Congress. M.P. Koirala later left the Nepali Congress and formed National Democratic Party on April 30, 1953. Although the National Democratic Party had no standing in Nepal's political system, M.P. Koirala remained the right hand man of King Tribhuvan until the death of the King on March 14, 1955."³³

All the facts mentioned above makes us to recollect the words of one of the most prominent Indian journalists, Kuldip Nayar, and the words are:-

"There was a time, soon after India's independence, when King Tribhuvan, father of King Mahendra, the present ruler of Nepal, had made an offer to Nehru to merge Nepal with India. He repeated the same offer during his asylum in the Indian embassy at Kathmandu in 1948 after the Ranas; his rivals threatened his life."³⁴

Former Indian State Minister for External Affairs, K. Natwar Singh, quoting L.P. Shrivastava's book on *Nepal at the Crossroads*, also expresses similar words recently and the words are:-

"The present King's grandfather thrice requested Nehru to incorporate Nepal into India and make the King Maharaj Pramukh--like Caesar. Nehru thrice refused (and rightly so) the 'Crown'."³⁵

³² Joshi and Rose, f.n. No. 12, p. 133

³³ Husain and Anwar, f.n. No. 29, pp. 15-16

³⁴ Kuldip Nayar, *India: The Critical Years*, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1973, p. 283

³⁵ K. Natwar Singh, "Can the Nepalese Kingdom survive without India", *The Asian Age*, (New Delhi), January 25, 1997

If the words of these writers were correct, the Nepalese history will record King Tribhuvan as an anti-national King instead of revering him as the father of the nation.

(b) ASSERTION OF PALACE: EXTINCTION OF DEMOCRACY

After the demise of King Tribhuvan in 1955, Crown Prince Mahendra (Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah) succeeded the throne of Nepal. It was during his rule, the palace asserted itself as the supreme authority of the country. King Mahendra was not a man to be daunted or deterred by any authority,-- be it the people or the foreign dignitaries. Because of his far sighted leadership, the attempt of the palace to restore peace in the country and to raise the morale of the people became fruitful. Both in the national and international fronts, the palace raised the image of the country and the people. But the other side of the coin was that the Nepalese people lost democracy. During his rule, the experiment of democracy under parliamentary system was nipped at the bud by staging a *coup de tat* in 1960. And the *coup d' etat* was followed by the introduction of a new authoritarian political system known as the Panchayat. The democratic experiments made during the period of this King have been traced here under the title 'Assertion of Palace: Extinction of Democracy.'

Attitude towards Democracy

With Mahendra's ascent to the throne of Nepal in 1955, the Nepalese politics took a new turn. This turn was marked by the assertion of palace as the supreme authority of the country. The assertion of authority by the palace made a departure from the politics of King Tribhuvan's period and later on became the very cause of the extinction of democracy.

King Mahendra did not have a positive outlook towards democracy and party politics from the very beginning of his career. Such an outlook was sure to arise in a King who wished to lead the country in his own way or discretion, say, as an autocrat. To add to this, King Mahendra had got some reasons too for the negative outlook. He was aware of the fact that almost all the political parties of Nepal, during King Tribhuvan's period, had tried their best to enhance their own personal interests at the cost of democracy and country. So he made sharp comments as regards the practice of democracy in Nepal even when he was the Crown Prince, and the comments are:-

"Democracy in its true sense could be possible only when people will doff their sectional interests; when they would stop going about shouting slogans and vitiating political climate; when they would awaken their latent national feelings and divert their energies to nation-building activities. But I have found that some people have identified democracy with licence to make disturbances and go about

spreading wild rumours...To hear such rumours saddens me; pains me and sometimes even nauseates me.

Untold number of political factions have come up,--factions without any selfless leadership,-- factions led by a handful of selfish opportunists who instead of realizing that golden dreams converted the country into a bedlam. Many departments have been organised along modern lines,-- even there corruption is rife. prices are soaring up, but all kinds of ostentions are thriving. Why are the innocent being made to suffer? Libertines and unscrupulous people are up and about. New schools and colleges were opened where classes are being run without text-books. Freedom of speech is there,--but grievances unheard. Freedom has actually become a tool of vituperation of the one brother against other. The freedom of the Press is there and it has become also an instrument in the hands of unscrupulous people to carry out their sweet will, rather than serve the interests of the law abiding citizens. Rules and regulations are being raped in the name of democracy. Cries of agony, despondency and perplexity are rending the air. The opportunists have lost sight of their national interests. The so-called progressive-minded people have cast all the norms of decorum and decency to four winds. The atmosphere became vitiated and confusion is everywhere."³⁶

These comments reveal how King Mahendra was not in a mood to let the country to be disturbed in the name of democracy and party politics. They also expose that he was no more prepared to remain as a King without any prerogatives, i.e., simply as a constitutional monarch. It was because of that reason, he asserted his authority and ousted Tanka Prasad Acharya and Bhadrakali Misra from the membership of the Council of Ministers while he, as the crown prince, was assuming the responsibility as the head of Regency Council. At that time, he furthermore expressed his contempt towards the wrongs done in the name of democracy and party politics in Nepal and the words expressed by him are:-

"It has been now almost four years since the inception of democracy in our country. But we have to search and research to find even four achievements to our credit in the meanwhile. It is really a matter of great pity. Should we say that democracy is in the state of infancy, evil propensities like selfishness, greed and envy are very much noticeable in it, which are unnatural for an infant. Should we say that it has already grown up, it is rather unfortunate that symptoms of growth are noticeable nowhere,-- a fact which is not at all hidden from my countrymen."³⁷

³⁶ H. M. King Mahendra, *Proclamations, Speeches and Messages Vol.I.* (Kathmandu: Department of Publicity, 1967), pp. 1 and 4

³⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 31-32

Expressing these words of contempt towards the misuse of democracy in Nepal, the King took direct control of the departments like Department of Anti-corruption, Central Intelligence Bureau, Public Service Commission, Department of Records etc.. Later on, he dissolved the National Government headed by M. P. Koirala on 2nd March, 1955 and began to rule the country directly.

Direct Rule and Reformatory Measures

Because of his negative attitude on the misuse of democracy and party politics, King Mahendra did not seek co-operation of any political party after the dissolution of the National Government. Completely ignoring the existence of all other political parties, he tried to rule the country directly. In order to make the task easy and possible, on 14th April, 1955, he announced the formation of a Council of Royal Advisors. This council was consisted of five members who were associated with the old Rana order. The main function of the council was to assist the King in the discharge of administrative functions. Among the members of the Council of Royal Advisors, Gunja Man Singh and Lt. General Ananda Samsher Rana were Principal Advisor and Deputy Principal Advisor respectively. The other advisors were *Guraju* Bhogendra Raj, Purendra Bikram Shah and Aniruddha Prasad Singh.

The council was composed of a Rana, a hereditary royal priest, a protege and beneficiary of the Rana system, an obscure relation of the royal family and a former official in the district administration. "The group was not only reactionary but it lacked any apparent talent or special skills to commend itself to the public. The only conceivable reason for the selection of these persons was the king's confidence in them as instruments through whom he could implement his own programme."³⁸

Thereafter, the King tried to evoke public support by undertaking a lot of reformatory measures in social, economic and judicial spheres. In this connection, the King enacted Land Reform Act prohibiting the land-owners from realizing more than fifty percent of their share. Under the act, the money lenders were not authorised to charge more than ten percent of the interest. Announcement also was made for abolishing the forced labour and for imposing graduated tax on land income of Rs. 3000 or on the amount exceeding it. Similarly for the first time in the history of Nepal, a plan with an outlay of twenty-one crore rupees was prepared for all round development of the country. An attempt also was made to stabilise Nepalese currency by establishing the State Bank of Nepal (*Nepal Rastra Bank*). With the establishment of the bank, the Nepalese currency was circulated on all over the country; the exchange rate of the foreign currency was fixed; and agricultural as well as other kinds of loans were floated in the market for carrying on development projects and business transactions. Similarly in the

judicial sphere, the Pradhan Nyayalaya Act of 1951, which King Tribhuvan had abrogated on February 13, 1954, was restored.

Besides undertaking these reformatory measures, the King made extensive tours to all the parts of country. While making extensive tours, he came into direct contact with the people listening to their grievances and redressing their problems. No ruler of Nepal had ever done it before. It had a salutary effect in popularising monarchy in Nepal. In the words of R.S. Chauhan

"..he undertook extensive tours of the country, not leaving even those hostile terrains where no former reigning monarch had ever dared to go and personally listened to the problems of the people taking into confidence the chiefs of various areas and acquainting them with the reforms he had introduced to redress their problems."³⁹

Consolidation of Direct Rule

King Mahendra wanted that the direct rule imposed by him be consolidated without any challenge from the political parties. It was because of this reason, he equipped the *Bada Hakims*, the Magistrates and the Commissioners with the emergency powers of arresting, detaining, externing or interning any person on the ground of internal security. Moreover, he encouraged and helped to rise those sections of the people who would rally behind the palace for the preservation of their own interests. As a result, sixteen Magistrates were dismissed in the name of administrative reforms. And on these vacant posts, replacements were made mostly from the Ranas and the Shahs, or say, the old-line groups whom the King had selected for his Council of Advisors. Likewise, in the Central Secretariat, he placed those persons whom he liked in key positions. King Mahendra, in this way, tried to consolidate his position by developing around him a vested interest group. This group had a stake in the institution of monarchy and were mortally afraid of radical political parties which represented forces of modernisation.

King Mahendra engaged himself in minimising the role of political parties in this way. It was because of this engagement, he could not give a genuine and efficient administration to the country. Later on, it became evident that he was encouraging those very forces which had helped to perpetrate reign of terror in Nepal before the dawn of democracy. As the King began to rear the exploiting classes, the administration in Nepal became corrupt and inefficient in contradiction to his claim. The result was that the people could not remain content simply because of the empty utterances or promises of the King. What they wanted was a very tough and honest administration which could check the exploitation of the people. At that very juncture, the country faced a grave food shortage or scarcity on most of the districts. The government could not provide even the bare needs to the people. The result was that thousands of semi-starved people began to pour into the

³⁹ Chauhan, *f. n. No 17*, p. 80

capital from the country-side. This pouring of the people gave a testimony to the fact that "the highly personalised rule of the king, instead of extricating the people from the socio-economic and political mess created by the unprincipled functioning of democracy, had landed them into the quagmire of utter exploitation, misery and starvation."⁴⁰

It was because of such fact, the political parties were looked upon by the people once again as their saviours. In this way, the political parties got themselves the opportunity to be encouraged. They took themselves to the streets challenging the personalised rule of the King. While doing so, almost all the major political parties, closing their ranks, made a united effort to win back the democratic rights of the people.

Challenge against Direct Rule

For the first time in the history of democratic Nepal, almost all the major political parties, with the exception of the Gorkha Parishad, launched a united effort and raised voice against the undemocratic and reactionary policies pursued by the King. M. P. Koirala, President of the Rashtriya Praja Party, described the new regime as the revival of old Rana regime and warned that the Nepali politics has reached at a new crossroads. Tanka Prasad Acharya, the Praja Parishad leader, alleged that the royal rule was against the wishes of late King Tribhuvan and was also opposed to democratic norms. Making a vehement criticism, B. P. Koirala, President of the Nepali Congress, observed that

"...the direct rule by the Crown was not only undemocratic, reactionary and shame-faced acknowledgement of defeat in the endeavour of building democratic institutions in the country but also definitely fraught with grave consequences for the country. The King's reliance on the advice of unprogressive and reactionary elements is causing anxiety among those interested in the democratic development of the country."⁴¹

Furthermore, the three major political parties--the Nepali Congress, the Rashtriya Congress and the Praja Parishad--warned the King of the grave consequences that he would have to meet if he did not restrain himself from the direct rule. In a joint statement, they stated that the direct rule perpetrated by the King is against democracy and antithetic also to progressivism. It is in the interest of the monarchy that the King should refrain from indulging in day-to-day business of the government.

Political Conference and Its Findings

In spite of all the criticisms faced by him, King Mahendra was not in a mood to take the political parties as the exclusive representatives of the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 82

⁴¹ Joshi and Rose, f.n. No. 12, p. 183

people. Hence, on 6th May, 1955, he called on a conference in which 129 clubs and associations ranging from the unions of *Halwais* (Sweet-makers), *Dhobis* (Washermen) and *Naes* (Barbers) to purely political organisations participated. The leading political parties of the country--the Nepali Congress, the Nepali Rashtriya Congress, the Praja Parishad and the Rashtriya Praja Party--boycotted the conference. While boycotting, these parties charged that the King was not interested in finding out a solution to the political crisis of the country. They also alleged that a conference of barbers and butchers cannot provide answer to the instability that had been plaguing the political atmosphere of the country.

Although composed of the members known as independents, the conference made it clear that it was against the continuation of direct rule. Summing up the results of the conference, the King himself admitted that the points which emerged from the deliberations were that "(1) Direct rule should be ended, (2) General Election should be held, (3) Democratic institutions should be fostered (4) The present Advisory Council should be dissolved."⁴²

The holding of the conference did not prove futile. It made the King aware of impending dangers that he would have to face if he deviated from the path of democracy as had been laid down by his father King Tribhuvan. Hence, he dissolved the Advisory Council and, on 8th August, 1955, announced that the general election would be held on the full moon day of October 1957.

Praja Parishad Government and its Fall

After announcing the election date, King Mahendra entered into negotiations with different political parties as regards the interim arrangement. As the King planned to exclude almost all the top ranking political leaders from the interim arrangement or government, the political parties did not agree with the King. As the negotiations did not bear any reasonable fruit, the King found himself in a dilemma. He was also not in a position to ignore the popular clamour for a democratic system of government. It had become almost necessary that he at least give a facade of democracy to satisfy the Nepalese people. For that, he needed a political party or a leader who would agree to play the role of a political sychophant. While searching in this connection, he found such one in the Praja Parishad. In the words of Chauhan

"...indeed he found one in the Praja Parishad whose leader T.P. Acharya agreed to form the government under the Royal hegemony. The King, thus, announced on January 27, 1956, the formation of a Cabinet under T.P. Acharya, to the great annoyance and disgust of other major political parties and the people as a whole."⁴³

⁴² Mahendra, f.n. No. 36, p. 13

⁴³ Chauhan, f.n. No. 17, p. 85

By playing a strategy like that, King Mahendra prevented the formation of a united front of the political parties. The desertion of the Praja Parishad not merely weakened the strength of the democratic parties, but equally showed to what extent opportunism and race for power had deteriorated Nepalese politics. The event further proved that the King was not going to hand over power to any party that might assert against the palace.

While selecting Tanka Prasad Acharya as the prime minister of Nepal, the King had in his mind that he should also, with the help of the prime minister, counter-balance the growing influence of India in Nepal. To achieve the end, he wanted to establish relations with different countries of the world, specifically with China. Although Tanka Prasad Acharya was not a member of the Communist Party, he was a votary of Marxism. That is why, the King considered Acharya to be a suitable person for carrying out a 'policy of balance'.

After assuming the post of prime minister, Tanka Prasad Acharya underlined a new foreign policy for Nepal. According to that policy, Nepal would maintain equal friendship with all the nations of the world; she would not accept special relationship with any of the nations; and she would accept financial assistance from any quarter without any condition. It was really a new and bold step in the field of foreign relations of a country which had been maintaining 'special relations' with India. In the national sphere, the prime minister promised to usher a new social order by eliminating feudalistic institutions. In pursuance to these policies, the government entered into a treaty on Tibet with China on 20th September, 1956 and also on an aid agreement with her on 7th October, 1956. The new government also established diplomatic relations with USSR, Japan, Egypt and Ceylon. With a view to reform the administration, a Reorganization Commission was constituted under the chairmanship of the prime minister. The Prahdan Nyayalaya (Supreme Court) was rebaptised as Sarbochha Adalat and an act was formulated in this connection in the year 1956. A Five Year Plan involving the outlay of three hundred fifty million rupees was drafted. The government also lifted the four years ban of the Communist Party.

With the undertaking of these measures, the people of Nepal became hopeful that their expectations were at the verge of realization. They were not aware of the fact that it was beyond the competency of the government to carry on all these measures. In the words of Chauhan

"The administration, in stead of becoming effecient and honest, deteriorated more and more. The Prime Minister's attempt to screen the services of all the gazatted and non-gazatted officers who had failed were retained and even promoted, while others who had passed were dismissed from service for essentially political reasons. The Public Service Commission remained largely a defunct institution."⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Chauhan, f.n. No. 17, p. 87

The main success attributed to the government was the starting of a diplomatic relation with China and lifting of ban on the Communist Party. The *Lokwarta*, the official paper of Praja Parishad mentions: "the greatest achievement of Tanka Prasad's government has been the establishment of friendly relation with China and strengthening of Nepal's ties with India."⁴⁵

In spite of its success in the foreign policy, the government of Tanka Prasad Acharya lost its prestige because of its servile mentality towards the palace. The servile mentality got exposure when the prime minister in an address to the public meeting at Birjung spoke that he would not tolerate any attack which would try to belittle monarchy in Nepal. To the frequent demands of the political parties for holding general election for the Constituent Assembly, the prime minister's reply was that this question directly dealt with the power and position of the supreme head of state, say, the King. This approach will expose the very existence of the country to danger.

The prime minister's controversial stand on the question of general election for Constituent Assembly made a large number of his partymen to alienate from him. The opposition parties also were disturbed by the stand. They exhorted joint pressure demanding dissolution of the Praja Parishad government. The obstructions created by the cabinet members nominated by the King made the government furthermore ineffective. The government proved failure in carrying out the party programmes. It was because of the reason, the central committee of the Praja Parishad directed the prime minister to drop all the ministers nominated by the King and also to compose a government of homogenous character. Frightened with the view that he might be disowned by his own party, as in the case of M.P. Koirala, Prime Minister Acharya tendered his resignation on 13th July, 1957. While accepting the resignation, the palace proclamation made a reference that Acharya was unable to conduct election as per scheduled programme. Although Acharya blamed foreign machinations for such development, he was not in a position to adduce any evidence to support his view. He could not understand that he was made to face such situation only because his role towards the palace had already been accomplished. To quote Nath

"The national committee of the Praja Parishad had only this previous month directed him to drop the independent members, i.e., royal nominees from the cabinet. Kathmandu had now established diplomatic relation with Peking. The role that Acharya was cast for had already been played for the King."⁴⁶

K.I. Singh's Government and its Controversial Stand

With the fall of Acharya's government, the King invited K.I. Singh to form a government on 26th July, 1957. A controversial figure in Nepalese

⁴⁵ Gupta, f.n. No. 14, p. 109

⁴⁶ Nath, f. n. No 2, p. 180

politics, the new prime minister expressed his unqualified support to the King at the initial phase. He presented himself as one of the most reactionary politician by making vain remark that the Interim Constitution-- by which Tribhuvan, the late King, had promised to give to the people an elected constituent assembly-- was to be thrown in a waste paper basket. He also alleged that the Koiralas (B.P. Koirala and M.P. Koirala) were demanding the election of Constituent Assembly with the sole motive to undermine the prestige and status of monarchy.

After assuming the office, the government of K.I. Singh followed a vindictive policy against its political opponents. It arrested many political leaders on the charge of maligning monarchy and creating lawlessness in the country. The government did not spare even the press. As regards the government's action against the press and others, the words of Chauhan are:-

"Within a fortnight of the assumption of office by K.I. Singh the repressive hand of the government fell upon five dailies and two weeklies. On the political front he acted with swiftness and on October 4, in a broadcast to the nation, he announced the postponement of general election for an indefinite period. Without any attempt to conceal his contempt for his opponents he was reported to have remarked-- I shall smear like papad all those who demand elections for a constitutional assembly."⁴⁷

Stand against Palace

The steps and statements of the prime minister brought forth nothing more than a worse environment in the arena of Nepalese politics. Now the people, specially the politicians, came to understand that K.I. Singh's cabinet was only a cover behind which the King engaged himself in consolidating his authority. The opposition political parties, the Nepali Congress in particular, seemed prepared to counter against the palace in the name of democracy. To that end, they started making serious efforts to strengthen their own organisation and mobilize people's support.

In that connection, the leading members of the Nepali Congress made an extensive tour to different parts of the country and acquainted the people with the ideology and objective of the Congress Party. B.P. Koirala also issued an appeal to the dissident groups to make re-entry into the party. The response to that call was very encouraging. The Rashtriya Praja Party of M.P. Koirala and a group of members of the Praja Parishad and the Nepali Rashtriya Congress entered into the Nepali Congress. Thereafter, the Nepali Congress confidently asserted

"A struggle is going on between the people and the crown for power... who is the repository of power--the crown or the people? The reactionaries claim that it is the crown, but the Nepali Congress

claims the people as sovereign. Without Crown, a State can survive but not without the people."⁴⁸

Consequently, it began to observe that "...if the representatives of the people genuinely do not want the kingship, then to give it a place in the constitution would not only be undemocratic but would be a big mistake."⁴⁹

Success of Democratic Front

As these steps and statements could not bring any reasonable fruit, the Nepali Congress decided to forge ahead with a united front. The Nepali Rashtriya Congress and the Praja Parishad joined the Nepali Congress and formed a Democratic Front. In order to wipe out impending dangers for democracy, the Communist Party, the Tarai Congress and other small organisations too supported the front. The front launched a vigorous campaign against the real threat to democracy and observed Black Day on 8th October, 1957.

The campaigns launched by the Democratic Front made Prime Minister K.I. Singh to realize his mistake. He realized that he had been made a tool by the palace to counter the activities of the major political parties. In order to correct himself, he changed his attitude towards the palace and took indifferent outlook on the anti-king movement. In the meantime, he embarked upon a concealed policy to undermine the position of the palace. With a view to outmanoeuvre the King in the power struggle, he reported to the King that corruption has become rampant in the administration and reforms are to be made in the administration by eliminating corrupt staff beginning from the apex. In that way he sought to replace two of the King's Principal Private Secretaries and other high officials by honest men whose number ran into 117.

Thereafter, he formed a Special Police Organization in order to maintain law and order and to suppress illegal activities in the country. He placed that organization under Special Superintendent of Police and the Intelligence Department --the institutions functioning under his own charge. Furthermore, he attempted to bring certain changes in the armed forces too. As the King apprehended danger impending in the over-stepping activities of Prime Minister K.I. Singh, he appointed a National Council headed by his own brother to make a supervision on the activities of the prime minister. Later on, on 14th November, 1957, the King dismissed the government of K.I. Singh because the government had proved already a liability than an asset.

Even after the dismissal of the K.I. Singh government, the Democratic Front did not remain silent. It launched a historic movement in the name of *Satyagraha* on 8th December, 1957. In connection with the

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 93

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 93

satyagraha, the front also made a scathing criticism on the King's handling of political matters and expressed

"Today the king of Nepal has become so autocratic that the people pale into insignificance before him. He sets up Cabinets favourable to him and dissolve them according to his wishes. This has affected the administrative stability and progress of the country. Disorder has been let loose in the country."⁵⁰

The *satyagraha* launched by the front gained full momentum. As the students of Kathmandu too participated in the movement, the administrative machinery of the country got paralysed. The King was compelled to proclaim 18th February, 1959 as the date for holding general elections. It was reported that King Mahendra, sending his confidential persons throughout the country, made a confidential enquiry whether any single party, specially the Nepali Congress, would get majority if the election would be held. He was being reported that no single party, specially the Nepali Congress, would get majority. Being confident of the report, he made announcement for conducting the general election.

General Elections and Formation of Nepali Congress Government

After the proclamation of election date, a commission was formed under the chairmanship of Bhagwati Prasad Singh for framing the constitution. With the help of Sir Ivor Jennings, the British constitutional expert, the commission drafted a constitution based on parliamentary system and submitted it to the palace. After making certain alterations for safeguarding the King's prerogatives, the palace gave Nepal her first constitution on 12th February, 1959. Accordingly, the first general election in Nepal was held between February and April 1959. It is quite surprising to note that all the parties prepared themselves for the election without getting the constitution. The parties were compelled to yield to the palace and go for the election of Parliamentary government instead of a Constituent Assembly. "The elections in Nepal were not marred by any violence or untoward incident though there were people (K.I. Singh) who later challenged their fairness."⁵¹ Contrary to general expectations, the Nepali Congress commanded overwhelming majority, i.e., it won 74 seats out of 109 seats in the House of Representatives (lower house of the parliament). By 10th May, 1959, the election results of all over the country was declared.

With the results pouring in, the Nepali Congress legislators, on 5th May, 1959, elected B.P. Koirala as its parliamentary leader unanimously. In spite of B.P. Koirala's election as the leader of the majority party, King Mahendra was not in a mood to select him as the prime minister. With the support of the Indian government, the King wished to form government under

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 96

⁵¹ Goyal, f. n. No. 7, p. 71

the prime ministership of Subarna Shamsher, the deputy leader of the party. So he delayed in the formation of the government for certain days. To quote Bhatta "King Mahendra had lurking doubt about the performance of B.P. Koirala,-- the party leader. Therefore, he wanted Subarna Shumshere to form the Government. This plan was supported by the Indian Government as well."⁵² However, B.P. Koirala sent an emissary to the Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru to help him in this matter. And the plan worked well too. King Mahendra was compelled to announce the government of the Nepali Congress under the prime ministership of B.P. Koirala. The words of M. D. (Murali Dhar) Dharmasasani in this regard are:-

"Bhagwan Sahay, Indian Ambassador to Nepal, advised B.P. Koirala not to go in for premiership since he was not in the good books of the king. B.P. Koirala, however, could not resist the temptation of office, and reportedly sent an emissary to Nehru to use his good offices in persuading the king to appoint him as premier. And with Nehru's backing B.P. Koirala was appointed Prime Minister in May 1959."⁵³

And this "clearly revealed that upon the pressure of the Indian Government King Mahendra gave opportunity to Koirala to form the Government."⁵⁴ The democracy ushered in Nepal in 1951 was achieved partially only in 1959.

Programmes of Newly Elected Government

The election result exposed the weakness of most of the political parties of Nepal. Among them, the parties which got low profile in the election result were those which had associated themselves with the palace before the pre-election period. As they felt themselves being obliterated from the national politics, they began to make a show of strength outside the parliament. At the initial phase, they made an attempt to get the election results declared invalid. Some of them filed a case in the Supreme Court on the ground of corrupt practices, involvement of foreign money and unconstitutional means adopted by the elected party. The court rejected the plea of the opposition. After the rejection of their plea, the three routed parties and their leaders--the Praja Parishad, the United Democratic Party and the Nepal Prajatantrik Masabha respectively of Tanka Prasad Acharya, K.I. Singh and Ranga Nath Sharma-- declared an open war with the government by forming a new front named as National Democratic Front. In a long statement, these parties made allegation to the Nepali Congress government as anti-national and reactionary. The other parties also joined hands with these frustrated politicians and indulged in irresponsible attack on the Government.

⁵² Bhim Dev Bhatta, *Decentralization in Nepal*, (New Delhi: Reliance Publishing House, 1990, p. 45

⁵³ Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 45

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 45

Despite these attacks from the opposition, the government began to implement its programmes which it had assured to the electorate at the time of election. The government felt itself morally bound to implement these programmes because of its commitment in the election manifesto. Moreover, it was not in a position to be frightened by the opposition because of its overwhelming majority in the parliament.

As a first step towards implementing programmes, the government proposed taxes like those of land, urban housing, property, foreign investment, profit and remuneration. It undertook measures in stabilising the Nepalese currency and made it available even on Tarai areas where the dual currency system had been in prevalence. An Industrial Development Corporation was set up for providing financial assistance to the newly stabilised as well as old industries. The most revolutionary undertaking was the introduction of Birta Abolition Bill. It was the bill which would eliminate feudal overlordship on the land, the stronghold of Rana regime. In October 1959, the bill was passed by Parliament only after a stormy debate.

The government also turned its attention towards reorganising the administration in a scientific and rational manner. The screening test, started in 1957, was resumed to regularise the appointment of government servants. It also passed a new legislation for the setting up of three regional High Courts authorising them to hear appeal and pass judgement in their respective areas. With a view to expedite the village development works, measures were taken to organise Village Panchayats and District Development Boards. Simultaneously, a broad programme was launched to build roads, bridges and also to improve transport and communication systems of the country.

Deterioration of Law and Order Situation

Because of the undertakings of these measures, the waves of change began to flow at every aspect of national life. As these measures began to give blows to exploiting groups, these groups began to raise voices against the steps of the government. The first voice against the government came from the forest contractors who opposed nationalization of forest lands. To quote Vishwa Bandhu Thapa "even the King's brothers opposed the nationalization of forest as it threatened to deprive them of their contractorship."⁵⁵ Similarly, the Birta-holders and big land-owners forced the government to postpone the abolition of Birta-lands and imposition of taxes for a certain period. The members nominated by the King in the Mahasabha also began to show stubborn hostility towards every measure presented by the Government.

The voices of the opposition, specially of the vested interests or reactionary forces, did not deter the Nepali Congress government. So the government did not take any step to postpone the egalitarian programmes launched by it. As a result, the reactionary forces of the Ranas, the *rajas*, the

⁵⁵ Gupta, f.n. No. 14, p. 153

land-owners and the money-lenders were compelled to take another course to counter these steps of the government. In the initial phase, these forces began financing newspapers and organising associations like Karmavir Mahamandal and Jana Hit Sangh publicly. Under the banner of Jana Hit Sangh, they staged *hartals* (strikes) and demonstrations in the Kathmandu valley. The purpose of these activities were to fight and frustrate the land reform measures and taxation policy passed by the new government. The *hartals* and demonstrations proved so successful that they created a situation of confusion and chaos among the people in general and thus lowered the prestige of the government, too.

The other step undertaken by these forces was the resorting of indiscriminate exploitation by expelling the peasants from their lands. The result was that there were sporadic revolts in West No. 1 where the peasants were compelled to resort violence and lawlessness as the only measure of safety. The deterioration of law and order situation helped the protagonists of the old feudal order to become bolder. They began to challenge the authority of the government very boldly. In October 1959 Raja Ramjang Shahi of Bhajang, a feudal principality, openly defied the central authority by refusing to give up the prerogatives of his court. He also began to impose fines on the people. The raja's son, Om Jang Shahi, captured some officers sent by the Central Government and began to loot the Forest Office. For sometime the local people sided with the rebel chief who later was constrained to flee to India.

The situation in Nepal grew worse when another revolt took place in Gorkha district. The revolt was led by *Yogi* Narahari Nath of Karmavir Mahamandal. The *yogi* and his followers had spread baseless rumours among the people that the Nepali Congress government was planning to confiscate their property, impose tax on women's pigtails and so on. Declaring himself to be the incarnation of saint Gorakhnath, the *yogi* exhorted the people to rise against the government with arms in hand. This exhortation made the people to rise against the government and also to attack in the office of *Bada Hakim* (Chief District Officer). As a result, the government was forced to send troops to bring the situation under control. It is said that King Mahendra had given Rs. 25000/- to *Yogi* for this purpose.

The opposition of the feudal elements thus succeeded in creating trouble at different parts of the country. The Nepali Congress government found itself incapable in effectively dealing with the situation. The country, Nepal, was once more drifted towards anarchy and uncertainty. Taking advantage of the worsening situation, the opposition parties too began to raise voice against the government. In September, the Gorkha Parishad, the Praja Parishad, the Terai Congress and the Karmavir Mahamandal decided to form a new party. A section of the Nepali Congress led by M.P. Koirala too joined the Opposition and demanded that the King should save the country from the Congress dictatorship.

Mahendra as Constitutional Monarch

B. P. Koirala was a man of international repute. His calibre and personality had commanded the honour of a leader not merely at home but equally abroad. He had become the focal point of Nepalese politics since the dawn of democracy in the country. It was he who seemed to be most vocal or critical both of King Tribhuvan and King Mahendra when they were imposing direct rule in the country under the garb of Councillor's Regime, Council of Royal Advisors etc. or of other governments led by sycophant prime ministers. It was this very leader who once had commented "If I come to power, I will put two things in the Nepalese Museum-- the Crown and the idol of Pashupatinath."⁵⁶

It was a matter of great shock to King Mahendra that he had to make that very leader, B.P. Koirala, the prime minister in Nepal. He had become the unanimous leader of the Nepali Congress government enjoying overwhelming majority in the House of Representatives. It was because of these facts, King Mahendra found in B.P. Koirala a grave threat to his position.

Despite all these facts, King Mahendra presented himself as a genuine constitutional monarch once the government of the Nepali Congress was formed. He remained silent and did not express resentment towards the newly established government in the initial phase. His actions and public statements seemed motivated by a genuine desire to give the new institution of parliamentary democracy an honest trial. He suggested some of the opposition leaders, who had petitioned him to invalidate the election, to make use of available legal channels for redressing their grievances.

Initially King Mahendra presented himself as a true constitutional monarch when he spoke in the Parliament:-

"My Government having firmly committed to the abolition of the Birta (Free hold) land system shall, in due course, introduce a Bill in the House concerning the Abolition of the Birta Land after due consultations with the experts, if necessary. A Bill for the abolition of the *Rajyas* (Principalities) and *Rajauta* (Duches) shall be duly introduced in the House...The land problems shall be studied by My Government with deeper interest and sympathy. To fix a ceiling on the land-holding; to redistribute the excess land; to abolish the *Zamindari* system (Landlordism):- these are some of the problems engaging the situation of My Government."⁵⁷

Encroachment upon Government Policies

Although King Mahendra posed himself as a sincere constitutional monarch, he was on the look-out to belittle the Nepali Congress government

⁵⁶ Chauhan, f.n. No. 17, p. 115

⁵⁷ Mahendra, f.n. No. 36, p. 154

and its prime minister. He was waiting for the time when he could strike the government and also grab the power by overthrowing it. It was because of this reason, he tried to minimise the government by staging himself as the real executive (ruler) of the country. In this context, he carried on his routine work of listening to the petitions of the people directly and of redeeming their grievances. This was, in fact, a practice which lowered the status and position of government in the people's eyes. Tradition-bound as they still were, the people considered the King as the true ruler of the country. Likewise, he made trips to different parts of the country to pose himself as the true ruler of the country thus breaking the tradition of constitutional monarchy. To quote Joshi and Rose

"Upon the inauguration of an elected government, some aspects of the royal tours had become redundant, if not irrelevant. Nevertheless, the King's tour of western Nepal in the winter 1959/60 was carried out along the same lines as his earlier tours and, as such, constituted a minor breach of his status as a constitutional monarch."⁵⁸

Within a short span of time, say, even before the completion of one year, the government found itself in a deteriorating position. The voices raised by the opposition forces as well as the people against the government was at the extreme. The government found itself unable even to maintain law and order properly. Right at that moment, the King implicitly took the side of opposition forces and began to threaten the government by making critical remarks like

"The fair name of Democracy should never be permitted to be exploited to do evil rather than good to the people. It should never be allowed to create a climate where industries should languish; rights and justice should be difficult of access; bribery and other forms of corruption should be rife; unemployment should increase; the people on the saddle should have all the loaves and fishes; anti-national elements should reap the harvest; etc. etc ... let all the Nepali people watch their steps in their journey so that I may not be constrained to initiate other actions in discharge of my duties and responsibilities. I would further add, I too, do have certain duties by my country and these are,-- to maintain the sovereignty of the country; to maintain the national integrity; to improve our relations with other countries; to initiate actions oriented to public good. Should I find any real let or hindrance along the path of my performance of these duties I would not hesitate to take whatever step that may be necessary and whatever cost...let there be no misunderstanding on this score."⁵⁹

A sincere constitutional monarch is not supposed to make any speech on his own. For whatever he speaks, the Cabinet is responsible to the Parliament. But in the Nepalese context, King Mahendra made the speech on

⁵⁸ Joshi and Rose, f.n. No. 12, 378

⁵⁹ Mahendra, f.n. No. 36, p. 163-164

his own even warning the ruling government ignoring the norms of the Parliamentary system of government. Moreover, he was having contact with the leaders of the opposition parties.

A few months afterwards, the King made an extensive world tour in order to create his image as the real ruler of the country. While returning to the country, he found himself intercepted on the road by the refugees of West No. 1. The interceptors demanded the King to form a Royal Commission for investigating their grievances. Taking the issue as the pretext, the King tried to encroach upon the activities of the government. As regards the encroaching attempt of King Mahendra, the words of Joshi and Rose run as:-

"The King, in order to apprise himself fully the situation of the country, began a series of interviews with the members of the Cabinet on August 6 and, reportedly, demanded information on the progress of the government's activities. Consequently, the month of August was filled with rumours that the King planned to dismiss the Nepali Congress government because of its shortcomings. B.P. Koirala's allegedly critical remarks about the Constitution at the Nepali Congress party conference in May were widely publicised, and the so-called lack of harmony between the King and the cabinet was soon described as a personal struggle between King Mahendra, who upheld the Constitution as it was, and B.P. Koirala, who wanted to amend it."⁶⁰

Extinction of Democracy

Later on, the King went on inciting the oppositional forces very implicitly to rise against the government. The response made by the Private Secretariat of the King in connection with the petition filed by the Jana Hit Sangh members may be taken as an example in the direction. The response made by the Private Secretariat to the petition of the Jana Hit Sangh members for repealing the government's taxation and land reform measures run as:-

"To add to this, the general election was conducted in Nepal, as desired by His Majesty, in order to consolidate democratic system for enhancing welfare and goodness of each and every Nepali of the country. As the government of your own choice has been formed as per election results, it is not proper for His Majesty to make any kind of intervention to the government time and again,--it is a matter not to be reiterated." If you think that the government which you choose for your own welfare has acted detrimental to the welfare of the country or the countrymen, at that time, every Nepali has the right to oppose the government staying within the framework of rules and regulations. If you initiate any good step in a democratic manner, keeping in mind the welfare of the country and its people, His Majesty also will act for the protection and welfare of

⁶⁰ Joshi and Rose, f.n. No. 12; pp. 382-384

nationality, country and the people."⁶¹

The commentary made by Joshi and Rose in regard to this response is that "in the circumstances, this statement was a virtual incitement to the Jana Hit Sangha to continue its agitation, which aimed specifically at the dismissal of the Nepali Congress Cabinet and the reinstitution of a direct-rule system."⁶²

The King started confidential meetings with the betrayars of Nepali Congress like Dr. Tulasi Giri, Viswabandhu Thapa and other leaders of the dissatisfied parties. He attracted those highly ambitious Congress leaders by assuring better prospect in case of success in their endeavour.⁶³ Initiating a lot of steps like these, the King took hold of the very government by dissolving it with a *coup d' etat* on 15th December, 1960. Comparing the *coup d' etat* with the arrest of Prime Minister Bhimsen Thapa in 1836 by King Rajendra Bikram Shah, Joshi and Rose write:-

"Fundamentally, the December coup represented an authoritarian resolution of the basic conflict between these two antithetical by-products of 1950 revolution. Historically, the nearest parallel to King Mahendra's action was the arrest of Prime Minister Bhimsen Thapa in 1836 by King Rajendra on specious charges, later recanted by the King himself, of disloyalty to the royal family. Those were the days of conspirational politics, and vicissitudes in political fortunes were sometimes expressed through poisonings, hired assassins, bloody massacres, and dark dungeons. In 1960 the participants were different, and the political methods and vocabulary were modern, but the basic spirit and idiom of Nepali Court politics remained unchanged."⁶⁴

Thus the assertion of the palace during King Mahendra's period led to the extinction of the parliamentary system of government in Nepal. If he had had the democratic spirit he would never have interfered nor instigated the opponents against the Nepali Congress government.

PALACE AND PANCHAYAT SYSTEM

Staging the coup in 1960, King Mahendra tried to continue his direct rule in the country. But he knew that in the sixties of the twentieth century, it was not possible for him to continue direct rule without acquiring the people's support. With a view to acquire the people's support, he tried to initiate a new polity in the country. The result was the introduction of a new political system known as the Panchayat. It was a system which recognised

⁶¹ Grisma Bahadur Devakota, *Nepalko Rajnitik Darpan Vol.II*, (Kathmandu: Arjun Bahadur Devakota, 1980), p. 268

⁶² Joshi and Rose, f.n. No. 12, p. 383

⁶³ From an interview with General Samar Raj Kunwar, ADC to King Mahendra

⁶⁴ Joshi and Rose, f.n. No. 12, p. 392

direct rule of the palace and created a front to meet oppositional politics. The political system introduced by King Mahendra survived eighteen years more even after his death in 1972.

The politics of King Mahendra's period is inserted here as (c) 'Direct Rule under Panchayat System' while that of King Birendra as (d) 'Expansion of Authority and Dissolution of Panchayat System'. The politics of King Mahendra's period begins with the royal coup of 1960 and ends with the King's death in 1972. Similarly, the politics of King Birendra's period begins with the King's accession to the throne in 1972 and ends with the dissolution of Panchayat System in 1990.

(c) DIRECT RULE UNDER PANCHAYAT SYSTEM

Mahendra was not a King to remain satisfied simply with the role of a constitutional monarch. He tried to impose direct rule in the country since the beginning of his career as the chairman of Regency Council. Later on, when he found himself unable to outmanoeuvre the popularly elected Prime Minister, B.P. Koirala, within the constitutional framework, he resorted to the use of emergency powers granted to him by the constitution. "On December 15, 1960, with the support of the army he had carefully nurtured, Mahendra dismissed the cabinet and its leaders, charging that the Congress Party had failed to maintain law and order and provide national leadership."⁶⁵ Even after this step, as Himalaya Shamsheer had rightly commented, the King "was not in a mood to restore democracy within a few days. It was because he always had nurtured the conviction of becoming an absolute monarch."⁶⁶

King Mahendra got encouraged in the venture because of the faith of the Nepalese people too. Instead of protesting against the *coup de tat* of 1960 as an anti-democratic step, the people hailed the King as if they had been delivered from the tyranny of the Nepali Congress government. The leaders of the minor political parties also did not remain behind in welcoming this step of King Mahendra. In the words of Chauhan "Some political leaders saw in the King's action an opportunity to climb the ladder of power and self-aggrandisement and they outdid even the King in denouncing the earlier government and justifying the Royal take-over."⁶⁷ The former prime minister Tanka Prasad Acharya took the step of King Mahendra as very timely and began to accuse the Koirala government of trying to collude with India. Similarly a large number of leaders belonging to the Gorkha Parishad also supported the royal step. The Prajatantrik Mahasabha, United Democratic Party and the right wing of the Communist Party of Nepal also showered

⁶⁵ Sita Ram Saran, *The Politics of a Greater Nepal*, (New Delhi: Raaj Prakashan, 1988), p. 19

⁶⁶ Shiva Adhikari "Himalaya Shamsheer Arthashastraka Marmagya Hunuhunchha Tara..." *Suruchi Weekly*, (Kathmandu) June 5, 1994

⁶⁷ Chauhan, f. n. No. 17, p. 169

praises on the King for his action against the popularly elected government. In the showering of praises, even the pressmen in Kathmandu did not lag behind.

Strategy for Consolidating Authority

King Mahendra was emboldened much more when he found the people and the minor political parties in Nepal acclaiming his step of 15th December. Therefore, he tried to manoeuvre Nepalese politics by initiating an alternative to the dissolved parliamentary system. As a first step, he released a number of political leaders whom he considered to be his political supporters. The most important among them were Tulsi Giri, Vishwabandhu Thapa, Rishikesh Shaha and Anirudra Prasad Singh.

After their release, these political leaders defected themselves from the Nepali Congress Party and joined the King's government. As already mentioned, Giri and Thapa had given the idea of staging a *coup* to the King.

Later on, the King mended the fences for imposing a new political order. In that connection, he summoned the Nepalese ambassadors, directors of various departments, secretaries and other high civil officers at the royal palace and instructed them about their responsibilities in the new political system to be introduced. On 26th December, 1960, he formed a Council of Ministers under his own chairmanship to assist and advise him in the administration of the country. The ministers were picked up by the King in his own discretion and they were given only limited power so that they might not be able to take independent initiative against his wishes. The ministers appointed at that time were Tulsi Giri, Vishwabandhu Thapa, Rishikesh Shaha, Surya Bahadur Thapa and Anirudra Prasad Singh, also accompanied by a number of assistant ministers. The portfolios divided to prominent ministers were:-

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Tulsi Giri | - Foreign, Home, Construction and Communication, and Palace Affairs |
| 2. Vishwabandhu Thapa | - National Guidance, Education, Self-government, and Development |
| 3. Rishikesh Shaha | - Economic Affairs and Planning |
| 4. Surya Bahadur Thapa | - Agriculture, Forest and Industry, and Commerce |
| 5. Anirudra Prasad Singh | - Health, Law and Parliament Affairs, Justice, Irrigation and Electricity. ¹⁶⁸ |

Steps for Direct Rule

After the formation of Council of Ministers, the King undertook the following steps for perpetuating direct rule.

⁶⁸ Grisma Bahadur Devakota, *Nepalko Rajanitik Darpan Vol.III*, (Kathmandu: Upendra Bahadur Devakota, 1983), p. 55

Reorganisation of Administrative Machinery:- On 8th February, 1961, the King announced the reorganisation of administrative machinery. Under this reorganisation, the army officers like "Kshetra Bikram Rana, Padam Bahadur Khatri"⁶⁹ were appointed as the secretaries of Home and Defence Ministries. Such measures were taken in the districts too. Among so many *Bada Hakims* of the old regime, only seven were retained and the rest were replaced by the new ones. In most of the civil and political posts, new appointments were made by adhering to the philosophy of the new order. Apart from maintaining law and order, the *Bada Hakims* were made to furnish reports about the political situation in the district. The reorganisation, in a way, proved to be a purge of the civil servants whose loyalty towards the new regime was considered dubious on the ground of political consideration.

Initiation of Repressive Measures:- As the King found himself challenged by the Nepali Congress from their exiled base in India, he enacted several laws in the name of Security Act, Anti-Corruption Act, Special Situation Act etc. to counter this challenge. Under these acts, specially under the Special Situation Act, the Nepalese people were prohibited from participating in any kind of political activity. With a view to carrying out these measures strictly, the strength of the military, police and intelligence service were raised.

After making all these arrangements, the Kathmandu Magistrate was made to serve notice to the self-exiled politicians for appearing before it within three months. As the response remained nil,

"On March 2, 1962, the property of the Communist Party leaders was confiscated. On April 1, the government seized the movable and immovable property of the Nepali Congress leaders on whom such notices had been served and who did not care to respond (These leaders also were given the punishment of the six years' imprisonment and the fine of 5000 rupees in absentia.) ...Such politicians included Suvarna Shamsher (Nepali Congress), Bharat Shamsher (Gorkha Parishad), Pushpa Lal and Sambhuram (both of the Communist Party)."⁷⁰

On March 6, 1961, the government also issued an order to the village heads--*Talukdars*, *Zamindars*, *Zimmawals*, *Keepatiyas* and *Patwaris*-- all over the country to help the government in mopping up all the suspected political figures. In the order, it was also mentioned that, if they derelicted from such duty, they would lose not only their lands and jobs but also be punished in accordance with the law. The government servants were also made to follow these instructions very strictly. The order also made clear that the ex-servicemen drawing pension from the government of India and Britain were also to follow this order strictly. To quote the order

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 45

⁷⁰ Chauhan, f.n. No. 17, p. 180

"Those (ex-servicemen) who neither control the (subversive) activities of his family members nor inform about their activities to the nearest police sentry will be deprived of their pension and also will be awarded punishment according to rules and regulations. This rule will apply also to the ex-servicemen who get pension from the governments of India and Britain."⁷¹

Thus the whole situation was terrorised in the country in favour of the King and against the parliamentary system. All sorts of rumour were spread against the party system and the activities of the Nepali Congress government.

Action Against Newspapers:- The government tried to control the press by issuing an order of a very strict kind. According to the strict order, all the newspapers published in Nepal, specially from Kathmandu, were made to be censored by the Kathmandu Magistrate Office before sending them to market. As the restriction could not control the criticism made by the newspapers published in India, the government imposed censorship on all newspapers coming into Nepal. Accordingly some issues of papers like *Amrit Bazar Patrika* and *Aryavarta* were seized under the order of the Kathmandu Magistrate. Not being content with this measure, the government, on April 3, 1962, warned all the foreign correspondents in Nepal not to publish or send out any dispatch on Nepal's political activities without prior official confirmation.⁷²

The other newspapers which ventured to differ from the government's order were immediately banned. Within a short period, the entry of five Indian newspapers and periodicals--the *Searchlight*, *Janata*, *Himalaya Sandesh*, *Aryavarta* and *Udyog Bhoomi* were forbidden to enter Nepal. And similarly, the newspapers from Nepal--*Kalpana*, *Dainik Nepal*, *Sameeksha*, *Halkhabar*, *Swatantra Samachar* etc.--were banned. The editors of *Nepal Bhasha Patrika* and *Samaj* were arrested. The correspondents of *The Times of India* and *The Hindustan Times* were asked to leave Nepal on the charge of carrying on a hostile propaganda against the Royal government.

External Reactions against Royal Step

The people of almost all civilised world were watching with sympathy and wonder Nepal's first experiment of the parliamentary system of government. They felt very much shocked when they found the dissolution of that very government by King Mahendra so suddenly. As a result, most of the prominent leaders of the world expressed grave concern and reaction against the action of King Mahendra.

Within twenty-four hours of the dismissal of the Nepali Congress government, the Indian Prime Minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru, made a remark on

⁷¹ Devakota, f.n. No. 68, p. 74

⁷² Chauhan, f.n. No. 17, p. 183.

the action of King Mahendra as "a set-back to democracy."⁷³ Initiating foreign affairs debate in the Council of States on 20th December, 1960, he criticised this act with the words

"...anyhow, the basic fact remains that this is not a question of pushing out a government which has a big majority. This is a complete reversal of the democratic process, and it is not clear to me that there can be a going back to the democratic process in the foreseeable future."⁷⁴

The National Council of the Communist Party of India, on January 1, 1961, also expressed grave concern on these developments in Nepal. In its statement, the council stated that "It was at the behest of reactionary elements in Nepal and outside and to protect the interest of his own feudal class in Nepal that King Mahendra violently subverted the democratic regime."⁷⁵ Similarly, the British Labour Party's National Executive urged the British government to use all its influence to restore democratic form of government. In its statement, the National Executive stated that the decision of King Mahendra to dismiss the country's first elected government, to dissolve both Houses of Parliament and to ban political Parties presents a further serious threat to the development of democratic institution in Asia.

King Mahendra was not at all shaken by so much of reactions arising out in international sphere. The authority being consolidated solidly both in national and international spheres, he was well prepared to face any kind of situation. Since the time when he assumed the office of regency council, he was misleading almost all the popular leaders or prime ministers of the country, such as, M. P. Koirala, T. P. Acharya, K. I. Singh and others. He had made them tools in the consolidation of place authority. Since that time he had begun to take in his grip each and every department of the country, i.e., the military, the police, the civil administration and what not? Because of the misunderstanding developed between China and India in those days, he had successfully taken China into his confidence. In that way he became successful in counter-balancing India's growing influence in Nepal. It was because of this reason, not a single leader staying in Nepal could venture to speak against the King even when he dismissed the Nepali Congress government commanding so much of popularity. Similarly, there was no one to speak even when the King dissolved the parliamentary institution established in the country after so much of toils and efforts.

Stress on Nationalism

King Mahendra went on consolidating his authority furthermore even after the imposition of the coup d'etat. As he found India to be a great threat in the consolidation of his authority, he made India the centre of his target. It

⁷³ Husain and Anwar, f. n No. 29 p. 22.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 22

⁷⁵ Chauhan, f.n. No. 17, p. 168

was not unnatural for him to do so because he knew how, with the interference of India only, the Rana rule in Nepal was forced to surrender in the year 1950. He was also aware of the fact how the Nepalese politicians, not in jail, had fled to India and from their exiled base in India, they had been launching movements to restore democracy in Nepal. It was because of the fact, the King organised propaganda campaign against India in the name of nationalism or Nepalism both in the national and international fronts. In the beginning, the propaganda campaign was organised with a view to arouse nationalist sentiment among the Nepalese people. The aim and objective of his campaign was to collect support for the royal regime from all quarters of the nation.

Asking support for the royal regime and also for the system to be introduced by him within near future, the King on 26th December, 1960, had stressed that "The situation confronting us today is such that rather than allow the country to go to ruins in the name of democracy, we are called upon to adopt whatever method is suitable for laying the foundations of democracy securely."⁷⁶

Laying emphasis upon the glories of Nepal, the King furthermore expressed:-

"We have still to make known to the world the glories of Nepal and the Nepalese. We would, therefore, like to reiterate once again that granted the goodwill and co-operation of all the Nepalese, we shall take our stand before the world and prove our mettle as the true Nepalese."⁷⁷

The concept of Nepalism or nationalism was made in this way the integral part of the new campaign. The new cult was made to be repeated time and again through radio broadcasts, news bulletins, pamphlets, posters and newspapers. In the campaign, the King's own poems which appeared in book formats namely *Usaiko Lagi* and *Pheri Usaiko Lagi* also played a significant role. The new cult, organised in that way, stressed on the implications that "all governments preceding the new one had been, somehow or other, subservient to foreign influences and that the ousted Congress Government was most emphatically so."⁷⁸

Nepalism as Anti-India Campaign

The new cult received an immediate response from almost all the sections of the people. In that response, the geographical position of Nepal also played a great role. Nepal's small size and landlocked position between the gaint powers--India in the south and China in the north--had always bred a fear-complex in the minds of the Nepalese people. The extending influences

⁷⁶ H.M. King Mahendra, *Proclamations, Speeches and Messages, Vol.II* (Kathmandu: Department of Publicity, 1967), p. 3

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 04

⁷⁸ Gupta, f. n. No. 14, p. 243

of India since the post Rana period, specially in King Tribhuvan's time, in various forms also created in impression that India was trying to exploit Nepalese weak position.

The cult of Nepalism, which took the form of anti-India campaign, was officially endorsed by Vishwabandhu Thapa with words like the days are gone when a first secretary of the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu too could change the cabinet in Nepal. The cult of Nepalism thus tried to prove that the then regime of the King was nationalist and therefore independent of India. Clarifying furthermore on that cult, the government laid down its policy as:

1. To safeguard the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the kingdom of Nepal under all circumstances; and
2. To keep the Nepalese nationality free from the unhealthy influence of anti-national elements that are motivated by anti-social outlooks as communalism and regionalism."⁷⁹

Failure of Armed Raids

The relation between Nepal and India began to deteriorate because of the emphasis on anti-India campaign. The self-exiled politicians took the moment as a grand opportunity for launching their movements against the royal government. From their exiled base in India, they began to organise armed struggle for the restoration of democracy. By the end of 1961, the struggle turned into armed raids supported by the Indian authorities. These raids of the exiled Nepalese were met with counter-raids by the royal forces right inside the Indian territory. The armed raids supported even by India could not get success. At that time, the palace had taken full advantage of the anti-Indian feelings engendered in Nepal because of India's big brotherly attitude since the introduction of democracy in Nepal. Moreover, Nepal's expanding relation with a number of major world powers and King Mahendra's projection of himself as the national image too added strength to make these raids failure.

Threatened by incessant raids from India, the King began to cultivate relations with external countries, particularly with the big powers as well as China and Pakistan. As and when the King felt that the relation of Nepal with China and Pakistan was already close, he began to express harsh words towards India. In the speech delivered on 5th January, 1962 organised to mark the First Panchayat Day Anniversary, the King implicitly expressed resentment against India with the words:-

"Basing themselves on foreign soil, these (self-exiled) elements are still bent upon deceiving their own country and countrymen and are still trying to act against the interest of their own country and countrymen with an unabashed partiality for all sorts of distortions...Even now they are prepared to make a deal with foreign

elements in the fond hope of usurping once more the authority to exploit the people. Under the circumstances, therefore, every true son of Nepal has got to be on guard against these elements; otherwise, the Sovereignty, Independence and Prosperity of our country will become mere pawns for the promotion of their evil designs; otherwise, the country will break into pieces and Nepal will cease to be even a geographical unit."⁸⁰

Similarly, the then foreign minister of Nepal, Dr. Tulsi Giri, "raised the possibility of Nepal's permitting Chinese troops to pass through to attack India if Peking pledge not to interfere in Nepal."⁸¹

During King Mahendra's period, Nepal's stand against India did not remain confined only within words but also in action. The actions were organised and planned in such a way that even the armed raids supported by the Indian government were constrained to meet defeat. As regards the failure of these raids, the words of Shaha are:-

"Another important factor was the Royal Nepal Army which, thanks to the Indian military mission, was better trained and equipped than the army of the Ranas--King Mahendra, therefore, was in a position to trust it more fully than were the Ranas and was in a stronger position to deal with the situation created by rebel activities. In all this, King Mahendra's own as well as his father's association with the popular struggle against the Ranas made their action less suspect in the eyes of the people. Last but not the least, the Chinese military attack on India in the fall of 1962 necessitated a change of attitude on the part of the government of India without any *quid pro quo* from King Mahendra."⁸²

As regards the evocation of Chinese support, the words of the supreme leader of the nation, Ganesh Man Singh, run as:-

"In the process of ensuring international support towards his own step, King Mahendra entered into treaty with China giving away half portion of Mount Everest to China. And this led China to support the King's Panchayat System whole-heartedly. That is why, China not merely supported the royal step but equally co-operated in maintaining the Panchayat System."⁸³

Similarly in regard to the failure of these armed raids from India, the words of Kuldeep Nayar are:-

"At one time, New Delhi was so exasperated over Mahendra's doings that it encouraged insurgency (when China attacked India in October

⁸⁰ Mahendra, f.n. No. 76, p. 72-73

⁸¹ Husain and Anwar, f.n. No. 29, p. 27

⁸² Rishikesh Shaha, *Three Decades and Two Kings (1960-1990): Eclipse of Nepal's Partyless Monarchic Rule*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1990), p. 5

⁸³ Ganesh Man Singh, "Mero Kathaka Panaharu", *Punarjagaran Weekly*, (Kathmandu), December 24, 1996.

1962, Nehru wrote to Mahendra that a 'chauvinistic and expansionist China' was a threat to the whole of South-East Asia. At the same time, raids from India had stopped. Mahendra said in his reply to Nehru that he was glad that the raids on Nepal 'from shelters in India' had come to an end. He did not refer to the Chinese attack at all in his letter.) within Nepal and raids by exiled Nepalese from Indian territory. Later the policy changed because there was no popular support from within Nepal."⁸⁴

Inception of Panchayat System

The palace had imposed direct rule many times even after the inception of democracy in 1951. The direct rule imposed by the palace previously were taken simply as stop-gap measures. With the dismissal of a very popularly elected government of the Nepali Congress Party in 1960, the atmosphere changed totally. King Mahendra was no more in a mood to revive the parliamentary system based on political parties. So the King not only criticized the Nepali Congress government but also attacked the parliamentary system itself. And he characterised this system as a clumsy western imposition incompatible with Nepal's traditions, history and objective conditions.

With a view to introduce such a polity, the King had, shortly after the coup, appointed an informal committee to consider on the political systems of Yugoslavia, Egypt, Pakistan and Indonesia. It was because of the reason, he could bestow to the people of Nepal, on 16th December, 1962, a consitution which appeared as

"a rather odd but ingenious combination of certain features of the 'National Guidance' system in Egypt and Indonesia, the 'Basic Democracy' system in Pakistan, the 'Class Organisation' system in Egypt and Yugoslavia, and the Panchayat system in operation in several Indian states. Added on to this basic structure were the Raj Sabha ('Council of State') and the Daudahas ('Tour Commission'), more perceptibly 'Nepali' in origin and inspiration."⁸⁵

The Panchayat System was a political system based on different tiers and the lowest among them was the Village and City Panchayats while the highest, the National Panchayat. The National Panchayat was a unicameral legislative body consisting of 125 members from where the prime minister and the ministers were nominated by the King. It was a polity with the monarch as the source of state power. King Mahendra defended this system as something indigenous and denounced the parliamentary system as something totally incompatible with the national genius. "The new system served his own personal interest since it made monarchy supreme as an institution. It also differentiated the political system of Nepal from that of India and thus

⁸⁴ Nayar, f. n. No. 34, p. 283

⁸⁵ Joshi and Rose, f. n. No. 12, p. 396

stressed Nepal's separate and independent identity."⁸⁶

There had been many writers who claim the Panchayat System as a polity having its seeds rooted deep in the Nepalese soil. A study of Nepalese history do not prove this fact so clearly. In the words Shaha

"... it is well nigh impossible to define the Panchayats in precise historical or political terms. Traditionally, after all, the Panchayat had been a council of elders drawn from a particular caste entrusted with the task of adjudicating minor disputes relating to caste matters. Even if the Panchayats fulfilled certain political and administrative functions at particular times, they were never known to operate as regular units of village or local self- government."⁸⁷

On the otherhand, this polity seemed to have a historical parallel with the political system envisaged by the government of Nepal Act 1948. "King Mahendra's denunciation of political parties sounded like a distant echo of what the second-last Rana Prime Minister, Maharaja Padma Shamsheer, had said at the time of the promulgation of the 1948 Constitution."⁸⁸ And the words spoken by him were:-

"We have tried to adapt the elective system of the west to the Panchayat system, which is an important feature of our tradition and culture ... It is the wish of the government to bring good, and energetic elected representatives of the people to the centre so that they might cooperate with the administration, but it would be a misfortune if the introduction of the elections should cause friction and disharmony in the country ... It is not the intention of the government to turn the country into a cockpit of political parties, and the government will favour the election of any candidate on the basis of his personal merit and qualification rather than on the strength of the party-machine."⁸⁹

Stress of Palace Authority

The Panchayat System was the product of King Mahendra's own brain. While promulgating the constitution of this polity, the King "embarked upon erecting such a constitutional structure of which he could remain the pivot. So he gave his country a new constitution in 1962."⁹⁰ With the promulgation of the new constitution, "fourth in the preceding twelve years, the two-decade old struggle for democracy came to an end. The 1962 constitution once again subordinated the citizen to the will of an all powerful

⁸⁶ Ramakant, *Nepal, China and India*, (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1976), p. 167

⁸⁷ Rishikesh Shaha, *Nepali Politics: Retrospect and Prespect*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 64

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 65

⁸⁹ Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 65

⁹⁰ Hem Narayan Agrawal, *Nepal: A Study in Constitutional Change*, (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., 1987), p. 56

ruler who held the monopoly of state powers."⁹¹ The words of Chaturvedi in this context were that "The 1962 constitution which stalled the process of parliamentary democracy and ushered in a Panchayati democratic system making the king the real and authoritarian ruler of the kingdom, was the brainchild of the king himself."⁹²

Similarly in the words of Agrawal "The 1962 constitution concretised the political philosophy of King Mahendra, the innovator of the system who was itching since 1955 to introduce a political system which could allow him to wield absolute power and enable him to consolidate his personal rule."⁹³

For the first time in the political history of Nepal, specially since the dawn of democracy in 1951, this constitution laid down in it the theoretical foundation of the palace authority under constitutional garb. The words mentioned in the constitution in this regard are:-

"The sovereignty of Nepal is vested in His Majesty and all powers-- executive, legislative and judicial emanate from him. These powers are exercised by His Majesty through the organs established by or under this constitution and other laws for the time being in force keeping in view the interest and wishes of His Majesty's subjects according to the highest traditions of the Shah dynasty."⁹⁴

The constitution of 1962, in this way, sought to vest in the King every set of political power that could be obtainable in a despotic order. The constitution occupied only a secondary role or place before the powers of the King. A study of Provision No. 81. (1) and Provision No.82.(5) of the constitution is sure to throw sufficient light in this regard. The words mentioned in these provisions are:-

"*Provision No. 81.(1)* If His Majesty is of the opinion that a grave emergency exists whereby the security of the whole of Nepal or any part thereof is threatened by war, external aggression or internal disturbances, His Majesty may, by proclamation--

- (a) suspend, except this Article, all or any of the Articles of this constitution or any provision of such Articles; and
- (b) assume to Himself all or any of the powers vested in or exercisable by the National Panchayat or any other governmental body or authority."⁹⁵

"*Provision No.82.(5)* "Any amendment made by His Majesty by a proclamation under this Article shall form an integral part of this

⁹¹ Nath, f. n. No 2, pp. 215-216

⁹² S.K. Chaturvedi, *Nepal: Internal Politics and Its Constitutions*, (New Delhi: Inter-India Publications 1993), p. 92

⁹³ Agrawal, f.n. No. 90, p. 57

⁹⁴ *The Constitution of Nepal*, (Kathmandu: Laws Books Management Committee, 1968) pp.8-9

⁹⁵ *Ibid* pp. 44-45

constitution.⁹⁶

The constitution incorporated within its framework not merely the authoritarian rule of the palace. In the mean time, it curtailed the right of political associations which had been guaranteed by the constitution of 1959 under fundamental rights. It also withdrew the provision for the establishment of a cabinet system of government making the Chairman of Council of Ministers directly responsible to the palace rather than to the national legislature-- the National Panchayat. Keeping all these facts in view, Nath very aptly writes:-

"The restrictions imposed on the King's power were minimal, his responsibilities and privileges enormous. The head of state could do away with the Constitution in an emergency, issue legislation under certain provisions without reference to the National Panchayat (NP) and dismiss the appointed ministers or retain them regardless of a vote of no-confidence passed against them by the NP. Only a member of the NP could be selected by the king to fill the role of Chairman (later Prime Minister) of the Council of Ministers. (It was a provision not always honoured by the king)."⁹⁷

Strategy for Enhancing Palace Authority

After introducing Panchayat System, King Mahendra consolidated his authority by pursuing different sorts of strategies. Among so many strategies pursued by him, the prominent ones are:-

1. Consolidation of state apparatus under firm control;
2. Direct contact with the masses;
3. Repression and fragmentation of opposition forces led by banned political parties;
4. Mobilisation of communist forces for countering the Nepali Congress activities; and
5. Stationing Royal Nepal Army along the Indian borders.

Under the first set of strategy, the King expanded and modernised the army as well as the police forces of the country. The leadership of these forces were handed over to the loyal and dependable persons who had got close family contact with the palace. The King personally gave serious and careful thought while carrying out transfers and promotion to the position of high ranking officers. With a view to create the bond of personal nature, he also bestowed on them with the grants of lands and other concessions. The words of Shaha in this context are:-

"King Mahendra's personal interest in the welfare of the officers and men of the army, and the bestowal by him of special favour on them

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 46

⁹⁷ Nath, f.n. No. 2, p. 215

in the form of royal grants of land and other concessions, have in recent years created bonds of a personal nature between the king and the army. The Royal Nepal Army thus regards the king as the sole personification of the state with the result that to the army it appears there is no such thing as loyalty to the state and the people as distinct from loyalty to the king as a person."⁹⁸

The second set of strategy pursued by King Mahendra was to create a background for endorsing divine right of King to rule the country autocratically. This was done by him by initiating programmes like touring the country and contacting directly with the mass. Through *Savari* (Royal Tours) the King visited various districts of the country where he established mass contact directly, listened to their grievances and dispensed on-the-spot justice. The King pursued this policy throughout the sixties with intensity. To quote Muni

"The king was also prompt in reaching scences of natural calamities such as drought, floods, landslides and earthquakes. He encouraged people to send petitions (*Binti-Patra*) to him directly about their problems and hardships. These methods helped the king in projecting his image as a popular monarch. Through official publicity and use of the mass media, the entire gamut of national activity was pervaded with monarchical ethos."⁹⁹

King Mahendra was the first ruler of modern Nepal who had made such an extensive tour of the country which had a salutary effect to popularise him.

Under the third set of strategies, the King employed various methods of repression and suppression to the political leaders and political groups. This was done by curbing on

"Fundamental right such as that of freedom of expression and association (political parties were banned) to imprisonment, torture, confiscation of property and, in some cases, even capital punishment. Political parties and their leaders, pleading for the restoration of parliamentary system based on multi-parties, were described as 'anti-nationals' and traitors. Tactics of coercion, co-option and playing one political leader against another and one political party against another were employed with great skill to keep the opposition fragmented and confused."¹⁰⁰

The other political strategy pursued on by King Mahendra was to cultivate understanding with the communist forces and lead them indirectly

⁹⁸ Rishikesh Shaha, *Politics in Nepal 1980-1991: Referendum, Stalemate and Triumph of People Power*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1992), p. 25

⁹⁹ S.D.Muni, *India and Nepal: A Changing Relationship*, (Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1992), p. 17

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17

for countering the activities of the Nepali Congress. In this connection, the King cultivated an understanding with the Communist leaders like Kamal Koirala, Keshar Jung Rayamajhi and Shambhu Ram Shrestha. Some of them, accompanied by their fellow travellers, were accommodated in the key positions of political and administrative structures. The King tried to eliminate the influences of the democrats as well as the Nepali Congress Party from Nepalese politics in this way. As regards the mobilisation of Communist forces, Singh Dhoj Khadka, in an interview, expresses:-

"In the days of Panchayat rule, the palace utilised the Communists with a view to suppress the Congress. In the politics of entry and admission, it was a golden opportunity for the Communists. 'We were quite strong in the days of Panchayat period',-- these words uttered by Comrade Radha Krishna Mainali to a weekly newspaper a few days back clarifies this very fact. Surya Bahadur Thapa, President of National Democratic Party, also had expressed, in this context, to a congregation of youths at Bhaktapur that 'as a prime minister of the Panchayat (period), I have got the bio-datas of the Communists, leaving aside a few exceptions, the Communist leaders of the central level had been mobilised and utilised from different channels during the Panchayat period.' With these words, he had revealed the secrets of the Communist leaders."¹⁰¹

In an interview, Professor B.C. Malla also expresses a similar view with the words:-

"In fact, the Panchayat government had created the Communists with a view to counter the Nepali Congress. As it had been a force created during the Panchayat period, they (the Communists) mixed themselves up to the local level and, from there, they began to launch campaigns against the Congress ...During the days of the Panchayat, the Zonal Commissioners would say:- 'The Congress are ready with the rifles in their hands and they may attack any time; you should at least attack them by utilising the *guleli* or by striking with boulders."¹⁰²

And in this way, "they began to cling upon King Mahendra's state power very secretly as parasites and began to stretch their volumes..."¹⁰³ As regards the entry of the Communists forces into the Panchayat System, the words of Shailendra Kumar Upadhaya are:-

"In the initial phase, a lot of Communists entered into the Panchayat as and when the programmes like Land Reform and Go-to-Village National Campaign were launched. At the time, when I was the Home Minister, I got the information that the Communists were arranging their settlement at Koshi and Mechi. With the introduction

¹⁰¹ *Nepalipatra Weekly*, (Kathmandu), August 18, 1995

¹⁰² *Suruchi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), September 3, 1995

¹⁰³ *Suruchi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), August 20, 1995

of new Education Plan, the Communists entered into teaching profession in a mass scale."¹⁰⁴

King Mahendra was of the conviction that the self-exiled politicians might launch their armed struggle any time from their exiled base in India for restoring parliamentary system in Nepal. He was also alert that the Indian government might implicitly extend its support and co-operation to this armed struggle as and when it would become possible. Therefore, King Mahendra, under the fifth set of strategy, managed to station Royal Nepalese Army along the borders of India so that the moves of these self-exiled politicians could be easily countered. As regards the stationing of Royal Nepalese Army along the Indian border, the words of Narayan, the then Indian Ambassador to Nepal, run as:-

"I was surprised to know from various sources that about three fourths of the Royal Nepal Army was stationed along the Indian borders, and one could hear occasional remarks even from friendly Nepalese citizens that they were more afraid of 'the South', meaning India, than of 'the north', China, in regard to any possible aggression on their territory. This was indeed painful and distressing."¹⁰⁵

This army was replaced from along the Indian borders as and when the Indian ambassador Narayan confided King Mahendra how he had co-operated him in curbing the activities of the politicians exiled in India. As regards the curbing of activities of these politicians, the words of Narayan himself are:-

"I also paid visits to the border states and personally talked to the Governors and the Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. They agreed to deal with anti-Nepal activities in a serious and thorough manner. It was quite obvious that such activities from the Indian territory were extremely harmful to our friendly relations with Nepal."¹⁰⁶

Despite so many strategies pursued on by the King, the Panchayat System could not win over the people's faith. Owing to its excessive dependence on the King, it could not succeed in establishing democratic norms. The Village and District Panchayats, to say in other words, the locally elected bodies, became just the tools in the hands of the administration instead of representing people's voice. It was natural that "such a system could at best produce a 'democracy devoid of its basic ingredients viz. political parties, ideology and capable leadership.'"¹⁰⁷ In the absence of an organised political group it was not possible that somebody would raise voice to check the autocratic rule of the King. In absence of any organised political party, the

¹⁰⁴ *Rastapukar Weekly*, (Kathmandu), August 23, 1995

¹⁰⁵ Shriman Narayan, *India and Nepal: An Exercise in Open Diplomacy*, (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books (P) Ltd., 1972), pp. 16-17

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 16

¹⁰⁷ P. Sharan, *Government and Politics of Nepal*, (New Delhi: Metropolitan Book Co., 1982), p. 124

King became an absolute ruler of the country. The leadership of the King remained busy in mobilizing personal gains by sycophancy resulting in widespread corruption, nepotism, immorality, favouritism and other evils. To add to this, the situation of the country deteriorated further because of the indiscipline among the Panchas. It made the people realise that the Panchayat System was not in a position to fulfill the people's aspirations.

Negative Impact in International Sphere

The imposition of *coup d'etat* and dissolution of democratic parliamentary system in Nepal created a new outlook in the international sphere. Everywhere in the leading capitals of the world, this event was taken as a setback to democracy. The political leaders and the governments of the outer world began to look Nepal negatively. The result was that the leading governments of the world, specially the governments of USA and India, began to curtail donation for Nepal's development projects. As a result, Nepal experienced the shortage of development funds. In the words of Karan

"In July 1961, at the end of the first five year plan period, the major development projects remained uncompleted because of the grave shortage of investment capital. Ordinarily, about 85 percent of Nepal's development expenditure had come from foreign aid. In 1959-1960 the dependence on foreign aid was 87 percent, and in the following year it was as high as 94 percent, reflecting on serious economic crisis in Nepal's struggle to develop on modern economy. During 1961-1962 Nepalese financial reserves were reported so low that fund had to juggled from one ministry to another to keep the government in operation. Further lack of resources forced the government to declare 1961-1962 as a planless year."¹⁰⁸

The outlook of these countries did not change even while the Panchayat System had consolidated its root in the Nepalese soil. The prominent writers of these countries did not lag in making sharp comments on King Mahendra and his political system in Nepal. In their books, they began to trace King Mahendra as a military dictator and his polity as a mechanism to rule the nation authoritatively. Not a single scholar was found in Europe, specially in USA, to support the King's step. Some of them began to prepare research works on King Mahendra and his political system too. Among so many research works prepared in Europe, the work entitled '*Democratic Innovations in Nepal*' by two schoraly writers Bhuwan Lal Joshi and Leo E. Rose proved to be one of the most outstanding contributions. Joshi and Rose had prepared this work with strenuous toils and sincere efforts. They had prepared it in connection with their dissertation and had dedicated it "to His Majesty Mahendra Vir Vikram Shah Deva, King of Nepal, and Sri Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala, the first elected Prime Minister of Nepal -- Two

¹⁰⁸ Pradyumna P. Karan, *The Himalayan Kingdoms: Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal*, (Canada: D.Ve. Nastradnd Company Cananda Ltd., 1963), p.112

Nepali leaders who, although at opposite ends of the political spectrum by a not too uncommon irony of Nepali history, are in real sense the two most important co-authors of Nepali political acculturation in the book.¹⁰⁹

King Mahendra's Propaganda Mission

King Mahendra did not mind so much at regards such works published from India. But he took seriously in regard to this book *Democratic Innovations in Nepal* published from USA. He felt that the propaganda campaign launched by him within the country was not enough to boost his image in the outer world. Furthermore, he wished that the book by Joshi and Rose be countered strongly. Hence, he employed certain well-known authors of the outer world in order to launch propaganda campaign abroad. Among the writers employed in this way, the most prominent one was Y.G. Krishnamurti, a biographer of repute in India. With his three books on (a) *King Mahendra: A Biography*, (b) *King Mahendra the Poet*, and (c) *Political Ideology of King Mahendra*, this biographer tried to elevate the image of King Mahendra in the international sphere. Among these books, the third book *Political Ideology of King Mahendra*, had tried to propagate the King's political philosophy or ideology in the western world by countering different charges raised against the King. The words of the author in this context are:-

"The Panchayat ideology has not yet found a supporter in print in America. Interested agencies are circulating bushels of lies like 'Nepal is our big headache', 'King Mahendra is a military dictator whose regime is supported by ten thousand bayonets', 'if all the dollars we have given to Nepal is piled up, it will form the fourth pyramid.' They are underplaying the king's significant role and spectacular achievements in the short span. Recently, this racket sponsored a book bloatedly called the thesis-scholarship. It does not deal in cool objectivity with democratic landmarks in Nepal but enshrines vestiges of old rancour. It opens with a positive mistake which has certain degree of blasphemy. The volume is mischievously dedicated to King Mahendra and a former prime minister who is now in prison at Sundarjal. The book is tenderly solicitous for a guilty leader who hoodwinked the democratic powers and curried favour with the Chinese. The work reeks evil smells, revels in ideological twists and is a tumor of propaganda. When will the Yanks know that to mention in the same breath a towering king and politician who is an arch-plotter, is an insult to the throne, Nepal and the great encompassing Hindu sentiment? If there is no king, the Americans cannot invent one. This very limitation can explain their grudge politics. In South East Asia much events have shattered the picture of American values and decencies. We wish to

plainly tell them that political history should not be seen as a single line of development with its terminus in New York."¹¹⁰

A study of this book will certainly reveal how the author has tried to safeguard King Mahendra's politics in a very crude manner. A few words of the book may be cited here as the example:-

"It ignored the depth of reverence the people had for the crown. It is a link of historical epochs, the fountain head of culture pattern, the centre of political values, an emblem of state power, a monument of spiritual glory and artistic hope and rallying point of national sentiment and discipline. The Nepali Congress leader shouted that his party was the king. The king banned the parties and the nation acclaimed his action. Since the Royal take-over, Nepal has lived in national unity, discipline and peace. The people have acquired the demeanour, idiom, programme and behaviour pattern of a new dispensation -- politics without politicians."¹¹¹

The other prominent book written in the sphere of propaganda campaign was *Nepal Aur Nepal Naresh*. This book written from the pen of Raj Nath Pandey, a professor of Hindi deputed to Tribhuvan University from India, has portrayed a very ideal picture of King Mahendra and the royal family members. The preface of the book by Narayan Chaturvedi has capitalised Hindu ethos of Nepal in a fantastically charming manner. Reiterating the words of Chaturvedi, King Mahendra had once tried to evoke Hindu sentiments in India in favour of Nepal. The words which the King reiterated from the preface of this book, while sending message to the first World Hindu Conference organised at Nagpur on 11th January, 1965 run as:-

"The Himalayas have been regarded as the abode of the gods in the whole Hindu culture. The creator has graciously set up Nepal as the central jewel of this region and has thus added to the beauty of the Himalayas and the greatness of Nepal. This is why the god revered by the entire Hindu race, Lord Pashupatinath has taken her under his protection. The sacred river Gandaki, the mother of the holy Shaligrama, has sanctified Nepal. Even Sri Shankaracharya worshipped the Saligrama in the form of Lord Nrisimha as his cherished ideal and it is still daily worshipped in his Shringeri Math. Lord Muktinath is regarded with as much veneration as Lord Badrinath in the Hindu world. Thus it would be no exaggeration to say that Nepal is for Hindus a country of highest sanctity and importance. Nepal has ever been a source of perennial inspiration for the Hindus of India. Not only that, Nepal is proud of the fact that she has provided asylum for the Hindus whenever they were in danger. Heroic commanders of the first Indian war of independence

¹¹⁰ Y.G. Krisnamurti, *Political Ideology of King Mahendra*, (Delhi: Adi Shakti Literary Foundation, n.d.), pp.3-6

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 109

like Nana Saheb Peshwa found shelter in Nepal. Nepal has always acted as a sentinel of India."¹¹²

There have been many other books and articles, too, in regard to King Mahendra's propaganda mission. As these books and articles occupy only a place of small importance, they are not being highlighted here.

Negative Aspects of Panchayat System

Since its inception, the Panchayat System was taken as a dubious polity because of its non-partisan or partyless character. As the people, specially the political leaders, assumed it as an undemocratic polity, they took but little interest in this system. It was but natural for them not to prefer this system because they had lost opportunity to experience their own role in the decision-making process which they had got under parliamentary system although for a brief period. "As a result the Panchayat System was opposed in general by those who thought it to have marred the opportunity of their role in decision-making process."¹¹³ The political leaders who participated in this polity were very few and they too participated in it only because of the high positions offered to them by the King. But when they found themselves thrown out from the power centre, they too blamed this polity as most defective and propagated for restoring political parties. To quote Verma

"The Panchayat system showed cracks quite early. Ironically, the eminent founding members of the system, when out of power, complained of the lack of enthusiasm of the people in the working of the government. The 'architects' of the system blamed it on its undemocratic functioning and doubted the impartiality of the Panchayat election machinery. The political defectors who had collaborated in establishing the new polity, once again proved to be turn-coats. They propagated the idea that they accepted the Panchayat System with the belief that it was a short-term measure and the party system, though temporarily abrogated, would be resumed. Now they demanded revival of political parties and the release of the political prisoners. This led to confusion in the political atmosphere."¹¹⁴

Similarly the words expressed by L.S. Baral in this context are:-

"The royalist non-Congress leaders may be generally described as normless persons, behaving as atomised individuals, divorced from the realities of political life. They were personally jealous of the growing stature of the Nepali Congress ... But these leaders were unwilling to modify their behaviour and became all the more

¹¹² Mahendra, f.n. No. 76, p. 291, and Raj Nath Pandey, *Nepal aur Nepal-Nareshi: Ek Jhanki*, (Patna: Gyanpeetha Pvt. Ltd., pp. 1-2

¹¹³ Indra Deo Mishra, *Understanding a Political System: In Reference to Nepal*, (Varanasi: Vijayashree Enterprises, 1985), p. 35

¹¹⁴ Yugeshwar P. Verma, *Nepal: Progress and Problems 1972-80*, (Mahottary (Nepal): Pratibha Verma, 1981), p. 9

obsequious towards the king for their political 'enoblement'. When the casting of their lots with royal regime did not bring the expected rewards, then only did they assume opposition posture, but that too, jitteringly and intermittently, and hence of no avail."¹¹⁵

The achievements of the Panchayat System during King Mahendra's period was no doubt the political stability and growth of national sentiments. In spite of these achievements, this system could not march ahead towards the goal set by it. King Mahendra had exhorted the people to accomplish in ten or twenty years what the other developing countries had done over the centuries. The exhortations of the king remained limited only in words and never translated into action. The people did not find any miracle within their sight. National sentiments, though aroused to a large extent, proved insufficient when realities of hard life were reasoned out.

"the entire decade from second to second remained steeped in political endeavours to counteract the vestiges of the previous political system and consolidate the new one...If it were not for the nationalistic sentiments stirred to wield support, the Panchayat System would have encountered more problems earlier than it did. The success of the Panchayat decade was the success of political manoeuvrability."¹¹⁶

Attempts towards Evoking Public Sentiments

King Mahendra was aware of all these weaknesses from the very beginning. So he tried to evoke public sentiments towards the Panchayat System by undertaking various measures. On 17th August, 1963, the King promulgated a new civil code. The purpose of this new code was to bring social reforms like eradicating polygamy, untouchability etc.. Although the ordinary people took the day of 17th August as the day of emancipation, the new civil code remained only in name. No solid contribution could be made by this code in the social arena because of the feudal outlook inherent among the upper class people of the then Nepal.

The other important measure undertaken by the King was the amending of constitution on January 27, 1967. This amendment tried to bring certain changes in the polity by making it responsive to the popular will in the changing atmosphere. As a result, the people were granted the right to form union and associations but without any political motives. The objectives and principles of social policy were outlined. Provision was made for appointing Prime Minister in lieu of Chairman of Council of Ministers. The Zonal Panchayat, the third tier in the hierarchy of Panchayat System, was abolished. The session of the National Panchayat was held open to the members of local panchayats and of executive committees of class and

¹¹⁵ L.S.Baral, "Shifting Elite Loyalties: The Non-Congress Leaders", *Nepal: An Assertive Monarchy*, (New Delhi: Chetana Publications, 1977), p. 82

¹¹⁶ Verma, f.n. No. 114, pp. 6 and 8

functional organisations. The amendment also vested in the King the power of making direct appointment to zonal commissioners. They were made responsible to the King alone. "The commissioners--direct appointees of the king --were to function as the establishment's arms for safeguarding Nepal's unitary monarchical system having an absolute centralisation of authority."¹¹⁷ The amendment furthermore laid down that the prime minister would be selected by the King.

As the amendment did not demarcate the powers of the King and his prime minister, Dr. Tulsi Giri resigned from the post of prime minister. To add to this, the former ministers--Vishwabandhu Thapa and Dr. Nageshwor Prasad Singh--also boycotted the poll of 1967 election because of disappointment created by this amendment. At this time, Vishwa Bandhu Thapa made a surprising disclosure that in 1960, when the Panchayat was being ushered in, he was assured from the highest quarters that the parliamentary system would be revived after a few years.

The other important measure in this direction was the launching of the 'Go-to-Village-- National Campaign' on 29th September, 1967. While launching this campaign, the King made a pretext to seek unbiased opinion on the propriety of Panchayat System from the National Panchayat. The King's words in this regards were:- "Whether the present system is the best medium for the steady and continuous achievement of the welfare, progress and prosperity of our Nepal and Nepalese society or is there any other system suited to our soil and genius which will make that achievement possible."¹¹⁸

When the National Panchayat responded unanimously that "Panchayat system is the best system suited to the soil and genius of the country having no other better alternative"¹¹⁹, the King gave a very comprehensive ten-point programme in the name of 'Go- to-Village--National Campaign' (later on termed as Back-to-the- Village--National Campaign). While giving this programme, he, in the programme book, used the literal adaptation of the late American President John F.Kennedy's famous sentence "so my fellow Americans, Ask not what the country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."¹²⁰

Non-assimilation of World Culture

In spite of all these measures undertaken by the King, the outlook of the people did not change. The people could not assimilate within their lives the benefits of revolution brought about by modern science and technology. Moreover, the human elements of world culture of the modern age, so to say, respect for the dignity of man, right to freedom, rule of law, majority rule,

¹¹⁷ Nath, f.n. No. 2, pp. 244-245

¹¹⁸ Sanu Bhai Dangol, "The Partyless Panchayat Polity--An Evolutionary Prespective", *Ranjham Vol.XI, No. II*, (Kathmandu: Department of Commemoration, (Royal Palace), October 4, 1975), p. 21

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 21

¹²⁰ Mishra, f.n. No. 113, p. 43

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¹¹⁵ L.S.Baral, "Shifting Elite Loyalties: The Non-Congress Leaders", *Nepal: An Assertive Monarchy*, (New Delhi: Chetana Publications, 1977), p. 82

¹¹⁶ Verma, f.n. No. 114, pp. 6 and 8

functional organisations. The amendment also vested in the King the power of making direct appointment to zonal commissioners. They were made responsible to the King alone. "The commissioners--direct appointees of the king --were to function as the establishment's arms for safeguarding Nepal's unitary monarchical system having an absolute centralisation of authority."¹¹⁷ The amendment furthermore laid down that the prime minister would be selected by the King.

As the amendment did not demarcate the powers of the King and his prime minister, Dr. Tulsi Giri resigned from the post of prime minister. To add to this, the former ministers--Vishwabandhu Thapa and Dr. Nageshwar Prasad Singh--also boycotted the poll of 1967 election because of disappointment created by this amendment. At this time, Vishwa Bandhu Thapa made a surprising disclosure that in 1960, when the Panchayat was being ushered in, he was assured from the highest quarters that the parliamentary system would be revived after a few years.

The other important measure in this direction was the launching of the 'Go-to-Village-- National Campaign' on 29th September, 1967. While launching this campaign, the King made a pretext to seek unbiased opinion on the propriety of Panchayat System from the National Panchayat. The King's words in this regards were:- "Whether the present system is the best medium for the steady and continuous achievement of the welfare, progress and prosperity of our Nepal and Nepalese society or is there any other system suited to our soil and genius which will make that achievement possible."¹¹⁸

When the National Panchayat responded unanimously that "Panchayat system is the best system suited to the soil and genius of the country having no other better alternative"¹¹⁹, the King gave a very comprehensive ten-point programme in the name of 'Go- to-Village--National Campaign' (later on termed as Back-to-the- Village--National Campaign). While giving this programme, he, in the programme book, used the literal adaptation of the late American President John F.Kennedy's famous sentence "so my fellow Americans, Ask not what the country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."¹²⁰

Non-assimilation of World Culture

In spite of all these measures undertaken by the King, the outlook of the people did not change. The people could not assimilate within their lives the benefits of revolution brought about by modern science and technology. Moreover, the human elements of world culture of the modern age, so to say, respect for the dignity of man, right to freedom, rule of law, majority rule,

¹¹⁷ Nath, f.n. No. 2, pp. 244-245

¹¹⁸ Sanu Bhai Dangol, "The Partyless Panchayat Polity--An Evolutionary Perspective", *Ramjham Vol.XI, No. II*, (Kathmandu: Department of Commemoration, (Royal Palace), October 4, 1975), p. 21

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 21

¹²⁰ Mishra, f.n. No. 113, p. 43

direct election on the basis of adult suffrage etc. were not absorbed in the new polity. This made the political situation much more confusing. Tracing a picture of non-assimilation of world culture, the present writer also was constrained to write:-

"...we live today in two such world at the same time, a world of ideas which we share with the rest of the civilised world, and another world of our own which we have inherited from our past. As a consequence, while we are, believing in the progressive social principles, busy in introducing new reforms in our social structure, at the same time we are making blind adherence to primitive and animistic beliefs. We lay stress on personal liberty but we are paying passive tribute to astrology with the belief that planetary influence determines the courses of our life. While we lay emphasis upon actions and efforts, we talk of fate too and regard ourselves as destiny's puppets. Even when we do not believe in casteism, most of us go on performing caste samskars. Likewise, we prefer to follow ancient ceremonies for the marriage purpose though we believe in civil marriage. The acceptance of these contradictory ideas at the same time presents an atmosphere of vagueness to the situation of Nepal. At this juncture when each and every aspect of our national heritage is undergowing a tremendous change and when every citizen of Nepal, be he a farmer in the field or a minister on the chair, is much affected by them, the malicious continuity of such unreason, bigotry and blind adherence to the past notions based on the misdirected view of fanatic past is extremely opposed to the new urge which each of us has to fight with. ...

In the creation of this new life we are, first of all, to be aware of the contemporary realities of today's Nepal and then we have to change the old attitudes and habits to meet these realities. For this we have to give up much of what our forefathers held to be sacred and which by a curious process has been identified with Nepal itself. We cannot believe that the new life in Nepal can develop only by holding to encrusted tradition and by hugging with affection every relic of the past as being a part of Nepalese culture. If we wish to meet the challenge of the time and intend to have favour from it, we have to practise the manners of the time. This can be done only when we drive the fundamental motive and the governing idea, which constitute the essential spirit of our culture, changing expression according to the need and conditions of our time for the highest achievements are not limited to the past only. The gates of the future too are wide open. Meanwhile we have to examine each one of our institutions in terms not only of its utility today but in terms of its conformity with the ideals of justice, equality, liberty and fraternity,—the ideals which have been laid down by us as the directive principles of our national individuality. Social tradition

representing custom and conventions is undoubtedly of immense value because it ensures continuity and carryover of national individuality but if they become the cause of our vague yearning of the undefined past by withdrawing unto ourselves from the better future to come, they are to be ruthlessly rooted out. This is the greatest challenge which each one of us has to meet as a hero and not like a dump driven cattle for compromise on such issues involves danger not only to the nation but also to the golden future to come."¹²¹

Failure of King Mahendra's Policy and His Death

The policy pursued by King Mahendra brought about a greater reward for Nepal in the initial phase. In the international sphere, Nepal posed herself as an outstanding figure even by overshadowing her giant neighbour India. But the policy pursued by the King did not last longer. Even in 1965, the King entered into a secret agreement with India endorsing some of the clauses of the ill-reputed treaty of 1950. Later on when the treaty came to light, the people in Nepal were stunned whether a dynamic King like Mahendra could have entered into such an agreement when the country was projecting its superior attitude against India. Whether it is to be agreed or not, the version of Aryal in regard to this agreement is:-

"The root of the ill-reputed Nepal-India treaty of 1964 on armament was that the nine tons of gold being smuggled to Switzerland by King Mahendra was arrested in India. According to the experts, King Mahendra had ordered Yadunath Khanal, his ambassador in India, to write this ill-reputed treaty when he was sure that the Indian South Block was in its errand to disclose King Mahendra's notorious activities. King Mahendra had pursued such a line so that he can save his image as a nationalist, as an honest man and as a lover of nation more than his own life, and also to smuggle the gold to Switzerland in a safe manner."¹²²

Similarly the words of Sapkota in regard to this treaty are:-

"In the name of nationality, anti-Indian slogans were over-voiced during the 30 years' period of Panchayat rule. And in order to perpetuate the authoritarian rule, the slogan 'Nepalese nationality is facing danger from India' was emphasised as a vital instrument. The rulers of that period staged a great show in the name of extreme nationalism and danger to nationality. But that very Panchayat rule which overvoiced nationalism seemed to enter into 1965 treaty with

¹²¹ Sanu Bhai Dangol, "The Task Ahead", *Ranjham* Vol.5, No.2, (Kathmandu: Principal Press Secretariat(Royal Palace), June 11, 1969), p. 19-20

¹²² Murari Aryal, "Tanakpur, Girja Ra Naitikta", *Pristhabhumi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), January 1, 1993.

India and it has been a naked truth lying before us."¹²³

During the first decade of the Panchayat System, the palace consolidated its power to the maximum extent despite opposition from the outlawed political parties. By playing China as a triumph card against India, Nepal gained a greater status although she had to suffer setbacks in the democratic fronts. But the situation changed in Nepal during the year 1972. Entering into 20 years' pact with Soviet Union, India dramatically changed her foreign policy and began to warn Nepal against her superior attitude. The policy pursued by King Mahendra, in this way, did not bring fruitful rewards in the seventies as it had done in the sixties. Nath traces a picture of failure of King Mahendra's policy with the words:-

"Ten years of his direct rule demonstrated that he had acquired the absolute powers of a dictator. There was complete centralisation of authority in the Royal Palace. The society now being exploited by a new elite composed of neo feudalism, revivalists and traditionalists. The administration had deviated from the guidelines he had set for the nation. His own relatives, supporters and sychophants had gained control of land and forest and the export business that brought foreign exchange. In stead of the Ranas, people had now to reckon a new set of masters none other than the king's brothers, sons or son-in-laws deeply involved in the hotel, bus, taxi or shipping business. Mahendra was surrounded by his own relatives and friends, a new class of vested interests that he could neither escape nor liquidate. Their interests were tied up with a political status quo. The King was a prisoner of the circumstances he had created for himself. The sanctity and effectiveness of his basic principles came up for a severe trial in the face of the society's growing demand for change and removal of all hurdles to progress. In 1961, people had accepted Mahendra's will while he was riding on a wave of popularity. In 1971 the credibility gap between him and his people was increasing."¹²⁴

Similarly, tracing a picture of the failure of King Mahendra's policy in the seventies, Nayar also writes:-

"However, difference between the two countries are not confined to trade alone; they go deeper. Kathmandu is trying to play Peking against New Delhi to get more concessions; an Indian is Nepal's ugly American, hated for the aid his country gives. But Mrs. Gandhi has made it clear that Mahendra cannot 'blackmail' India any longer, hence the increasing hiatus between the two countries."¹²⁵

¹²³ Kumar Sapkota, "Kukhyat Rajdoot'ko Chhahariko Khoji", *Suruchi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), December 25, 1994

¹²⁴ Nath, f.n. No.2, pp. 297-298

¹²⁵ Nayar, f.n. No. 34, p. 285

India also helped East Pakistan to emerge as a new nation in the family of nations. The creation of Bangladesh, in this way, by splitting Pakistan brought a great shock to Nepal and specially to the dominant King Mahendra. The King felt that if he were to survive for more years, it was sure, Nepal would have to face danger not merely in its sovereignty but equally in the dynasty of the Shah kings. Hence feeling deeply shocked, he uttered the words "even if I die ensure that the country lives on,"¹²⁶ he died soon. And in this way, the politics of King Mahendra's period came to an end.

(d) OVER EXPANSION OF AUTHORITY AND DISSOLUTION OF PANCHAYAT SYSTEM

With the death of King Mahendra in 1972, Crown Prince Birendra Bir Bikram Shah ascended the throne of Nepal. Despite his schooling at Saint Joseph in India, Eton in England, Tokyo University in Japan and Harvard University in USA, Birendra could not project himself as a King of democratic outlook. Stepping into the footprints of his father, King Mahendra, he began to expand palace authority more and more. As the expansion of the palace authority reached to its extreme, the people were constrained to launch a movement against the palace and the then political system. The result was that the Panchayat System was overthrown in 1990 after the experimentation of about three decades. A brief summary of Nepalese politics of King Birendra's time is being given below.

King Birendra in His Father's Footsteps

With Birendra's ascendancy to the throne, the Nepalese people, specially the political leaders and the educated mass, expected a lot from the new King. Among these expectations, the most important one was that the new King would liberalise the existing political system and thus would decentralise power from the palace to the people. It was but natural for the people to make such expectations because King Birendra, unlike all of his predecessors, had been benefited with the formal schooling at different highly esteemed educational institutions of developed countries of the world. He had also acquired abundant knowledge by travelling extensively to almost all the continents of the world while he was still the Crown Prince of Nepal.

Despite all these backgrounds possessed by the new King, the people's expectation remained unfulfilled. In contradiction to the general impression of the people that "Prince Birendra was an ardent champion of the liberal values like democracy, liberty and human rights..., in his very first

¹²⁶ Quoted in H.M. King Birendra, *Proclamations, Speeches and Messages 1972-81*, (Kathmandu: Department of Information, 1982), p. 18

speech Prince Birendra made it clear that only Panchayat system is suitable for Nepal.¹²⁷ Notwithstanding his liberal education in the democratic environs at Eton and Harvard, King Birendra thus inherited the ethos of absolute monarchy as pursued by his father. As regards the inheritance of this ethos, King Birendra expresses the following words to an American weekly in September 1973

"In Nepal, the monarch and his subjects, have been governed by *dharma*, a system drawn from the Hindu religion. The king cannot change this value system. Therefore, he too is governed by the ethical code. According to this code the King lives and has his being only to protect the people, to dispense justice to them and punish the wrongdoers. Indeed the king embodies the collective identity of the people and, as desired by the people, it is he who grants and amends the constitution."¹²⁸

And in answer to a question, 'How do you feel about being looked upon as god?' he furthermore adds:-

"It is not a question of how I feel about it. These are local customs and traditions. This relates to our religious background. I have responsibility (under the Vedic scriptures) to protect the people against injustice. The concept of god is there among the people."¹²⁹

Stepping into the footprints of his father in this way, King Birendra tried to assert himself as a King possessing divine right to rule the country. It was because of this reason Shaha makes a comment with the words:- "(he) placed himself above the government and the constitution because both of them were his creations."¹³⁰ Similarly as regards the undemocratic psychology of King Birendra, an American writer, Muravchick, also has commented:- "Study in America does not automatically produce democrats. King Birendra of Nepal studied here as did President for life Hastings Kamaza Banda of Malawi; so have come some leaders of non-democratic revolutionary movenents."¹³¹

King Birendra and Development Activities

Supervision of Development Activities:- Unlike his predecessors--grand-father Tribhuvan and father Mahendra-- King Birendra had no political problem to face in the initial phase of his rule. The power and authority of the palace already being consolidated during his father's period, he could now divert his attention solidly towards the development of the country. That is why, from the very begining of his rule, the King undertook the task of

¹²⁷ Chaturvedi, f. n. No. 92, p. 121

¹²⁸ Muni f. n. No. 99, p. 18

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 19

¹³⁰ Shaha, f. n. No. 82, p. 9

¹³¹ Joshua Muravchick, *Exporting Democracy*, (Washington: A.R.I.Press Publishers for the American Enterprise Institute, 1991), p. 171

supervising national development. In this connection, he set up a National Development Council under his own chairmanship and began to guide National Planning Commission in executing development projects rapidly. With a view to ensure balanced development of the country, he divided the country into four development regions-- Cenral, Western, Far-Western and Eastern-- and fixed their head-quarters respectively in Kathmandu, Pokhara, Surkhet and Dhankutta. Later on, the Far-Western Region was divided into Mid-Western and Far-Westren Regions and the head-quarters of these regions were fixed as Surkhet and Dipayal respectively.

While initiating all these tasks, he had in his mind the down-trodden situation of the country and the poverty of the people. He had acquired the knowledge of downtroddenness and poverty during his extensive tours to the eastern and western districts of Nepal while he was still a crown prince. According to the book published by His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMGN) on *Crown, Country and Coronation*

"Travelling incognito, and trekking with few companions, the Crown Prince would put up for the night wherever darkness overtook him, sleeping in wayside inns, peasant's hutment and dingily rooms of some primary schools. Travelling unencumbered with the provisions, the prince ate whatever were available--plain rice and vegetables, puffed corn, unleavened bread and raw radish. The hardship of these journeys had a tonic effect on both his mind and body."¹³²

It was because of this knowledge of the country's situation and the people's poverty, King Birendra also promised to fight for the cause of the people and the country since the initial phase of his assumption of office as the head of state. With the words "Just as I have affection for my country and people, so also I bear my responsibility to alleviate the suffering of my sick and hungry men,"¹³³ he undertook the task of supervising the development works. He undertook this task with the view that the country may make rapid strides in the development path and the people's standard living be raised at the earliest.

As regards King Birendra's notion of development, the book further elaborates:-

"To ensure perpetual life to the idea of balanced regional growth of our national economy, His Majesty King Birendra has adopted, as a matter of routine, the practice of staying in various zonal head-quarters for various periods of time every year. The maintenance of such close touch with various, zones, including His Majesty's personal inspection tours on helicopters, in spite of dangerous landing and take-off, has gone a long way in creating a congenial

¹³² *Crown, Country and Coronation*, (Kathmandu: Department of Information, 1976), p. 8
¹³³ H.M. King Birendra, *Speeches, Proclamations and Messages*, (Kathmandu: Department of Information, 1975), p. 38

climate of national development. By rewarding sincere workers and punishing the people found guilty of dereliction of duty, His Majesty has been instrumental in the moral upliftment of the people engaged in development activities."¹³⁴

Negative Aspects of Supervision Activities:- In the initial phase, the visit and supervision of the King paid a lot. Later on, it turned simply into a stereo-typed routine work and did not bear so much fruit. The development task became just a mechanism to perpetrate frauds and corruption on the part of important figures engaged in it. Later on, these factors greatly contributed to make the Panchayat System failure. Sketching a picture of such cheating and fraud in the sphere of development efforts, Sharma in his writes:-

"Nutan, Chiran and Ranjan were clever. They possessed the knowledge of that science through which they could produce cauliflowers devoid of roots, bananas in the alpine heights and apples in the Tarai belts. Only during the programmes of the king's visit to his country, such strange fruits and harvests were exhibited. In spite of all these commendable activities they were the only fortunate experts to be awarded with decorations and honours."¹³⁵

Similarly, former Joint Zonal Commissioner, Maheswar Sharma, traces some of the mischiefs perpetrated in the name of the King's development visit. The synopsis of some of them are entailed here:-

- a. On 12th Paukha, 2044 V.E., His Majesty paid a development visit to Dhankutta. At this time, someone from the Tour Camp called him (Sharma) on telephone to supply seven bouquets of roses every morning. The telephone caller kept his name secret. It was an order which could not be defied. As there was no adequate roses in the market, he consulted the Zonal Commissioner and then supplied them by ordering from Calcutta. The bouquets were sent to Dhankutta from Biratnagar every morning by a car. The Tour Ministry made the payment of bouquets although the expenses incurred thereto might have been adjusted from the money collected from public revenue.¹³⁶
- b. An order was received from Dhankutta Tour camp for supplying two trucks of dry Asna (fire) wood for camp firing. With the help of Conservator Kedar Karki, the dry wood was selected and prepared for supplying. At that time a military officer came and chided the ranger for arranging bad wood. He took the wood to the barrack and asked for preparing other nice wood. The conservator was annoyed to learn of it. However, he again

¹³⁴ Crown..., f.n. No. 132, p. 23

¹³⁵ Saroj Sharma, "Prajatantrako Udayapachi Shakti Ma Bepatta Tara...", *Suruchi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), December 26, 1993

¹³⁶ *Vimarsha Weekly*, (Kathmandu), February 11, 1994

selected the woods and supplied them too. This time, there was no comment for supplying green wood. The reason was that the barrack had supplied the dry wood to the Tour Camp from among the previous lot while the later stock was reserved in the barrack.¹³⁷

- c. An order was received from the Tour Camp for supplying wooden frames and planks for preparing four hundred cots. With the help of Conservator Kedar Karki, the wooden logs were supplied to Sarada Saw Mill at Itahari for making frames and planks. But all the woods sawed by the mill were taken to Itahari barrack on the pretext that the mill did not refund the logs supplied to it for sawing a few days back. Conservator Karki was shocked to learn of it. He was also afraid that he might lose his own service for being unable to supply the materials within time. While being consoled, Conservator Karki arranged for sending the logs two or three days later. The excise duty of the logs carried on by the barrack also was added in the supply of these logs. The amount to be paid was six lakhs rupees approximately. The responsibility of paying this amount was handed over to the Ministry of Forest. On each tour programme, materials like these, i.e., wood, grass (*Khar*) and bricks were supplied to the Tour Camp but they were not restored again. No one knew where the materials would go. Raising questions on such matters would be like entering into death cells. However, there had been rumours that someone would erect his own building at Kathmandu with these materials."¹³⁸

King Birendra and Royal Family Members

Royalties in National Activities:- The changing trend in the political scenario after the dawn of democracy in 1951 demanded that education be made a matter of vital importance in the civic life of the country. The demand for education became a matter of so much importance that even the ordinary people of the villages began to ask for schools. The result was that even the members of ordinary families, specially in the capital, began to acquire education from their early childhood. It was not unnatural that the royal family members may remain educated in the changing context.

King Birendra was married to Queen Aishwarya Rajya Laxmi Devi, who, unlike the former queens, was endowed with formal education and possessed a graduate degree from the Tribhuvan University. Similarly, the brothers and sisters of the King too had formal schooling with certificates of various degrees. It was because of the educational background possessed by them, they were not in a position to remain calm and silent unlike their

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 6

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 6

predecessors. The result was that they began to hold key positions in different areas of national life. The posts, which they held, were not merely ceremonial positions as in the past. "Members of the king's sisters and aunts, have also been put in the charge of different committees looking after various social organisations such as the Nepal Red Cross, not just as honorary chairpersons or patrons but as effective heads of the executive committees of these organisations."¹³⁹ As regards the other roles of the royal family members, Shaha again writes:-

"During King Birendra's rule, which began in January, 1972, the king's brothers, besides serving as chairman and member of the councils of royal representatives, had performed numerous ceremonial functions such as attending state funerals and coronations (abroad) and also have undertaken goodwill visits of a semi-official character to neighbouring countries such as India, China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. They supervise the national Sports Council and Scouts and the king's brothers and sisters attend embassy national day functions as the king's representatives."¹⁴⁰

Waning Position of Royalties:- In the beginning, the association of royal family members with these organisations paid a lot positively. The organisations found themselves elevated to high status. The associations of the blinds, disabled, leprosy, children, women, Red Cross and the Scouts rendered commendable services at the initial phase. Later on the smugglers, black marketers and the corrupt people entered into these organisations and thus they associated themselves with the royalties. In order to accomplish their own selfish ends, they began to spread their networks in these organisations. They consolidated their own positions by engaging themselves on certain religious or social organisations. The result was that those who did not know even the ABC of religion began to play politics in the name of religion. "Golchha, Khetan, Tandon, Kediya, Chaudhari, Chenwallah and others became the religious and social workers. Dugar became the academician. On the basis of donation contributed by them, they became the dowagers of prestige, decoration and nomination."¹⁴¹

The new trend in social and religious organisations made the royal family members shady and their values began to wane day by day. The waning trend was furthermore enhanced when Queen Aishwarya began to preside over Social Services National Coordination Council and Pashupati Development Trust. The government found itself unable to control corruption and disturbances created by these organisations because of the involvement of the royalties. It was because of this disturbing trend, journalists began to raise

¹³⁹ Shaha, f. n. No. 98, p. 33

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 33

¹⁴¹ Maheshwar Sharma, "Jagire Yatrako Itibrita", *Saptahik Vimarsha*, (Kathmandu), February 25, 1994

voice against the royalties both explicitly and implicitly. As regards the waning position of the royal family members, Reaper and Hoftun have forwarded the opinion

"Rumours were rife around Kathmandu and articles in certain banned newspapers suggested that the royal family itself was implicated in smuggling drugs and gold. The rumours gained strength as important official posts were handed out to members of the royal family. The king's brothers, whose reputations were at best shady, were given chairmanships of several important trusts. More importantly, the Queen was made head of the newly-established Social Services National Commission. The Queen had become a public figure in her own right and it did not help alleviate suspicion that she came from Rana stock. All aid money from private agencies was to be channeled through the Social Services National Commission and it was feared that a substantial amount of cash would disappear into palace pockets."¹⁴²

Exploitations Under Royalties' Name: Former Joint Zonal Commissioner Maheshwar Sharma, in his book *Ranthamol*, also has traced a similar picture on the exploitations perpetrated by some of these organisations in the name of royal family members. The synopsis of some of them are given below:-

- a. "It was a time when the royalties were on their visit to Eastern Development Region. Someone called me on telephone. 'I have been here to raise funds for the Pashupati area. The fund is to be offered to Her Majesty at the time of this tour programme. I am now staying with Generalsaheb. Also send me a car by next morning with full patrol tank. 'I asked, 'sorry, I could not recognize who is this gentleman speaking?' The reply was 'Oh did you not recognize me, I am the former Attorney General ...' The next morning the former Attorney General arrived very early. There were only two of us. Yet bringing his mouth towards my ear, he whispered 'I have been here by Her Majesty's command; the fund should be raised at this period.' He began to press me with these words. The activities of the personalities who would win nominations, ambassadors, decorations etc. by playing foul like this could never reach to the ears of the royalties."¹⁴³
- b. "On 15th March, 1988, the Zonal Commissioner of Koshi Zone invited all the elites of Biratnagar at his briefing hall. After giving a lecture, accompanied by two former generals, he, as commanded by Their Majesties, submitted to them a ready-

¹⁴² William Reaper and Martin Hoftun, *Spring Awakening: An Account of the 1990 Revolution in Nepal*, (New Delhi: Viking Penguin Books India (P) Ltd., 1992), p. 17

¹⁴³ Sharma, f.n. No. 141, p. 6

made list for contributing donations. The total figure of the donation to be contributed amounted to 10 million rupees. The elites were constrained to pay the amount as fixed in the list. Next day, the price of the steel utensils rose by twenty percent and the cements by Rs 5/- per bag. There was no one to raise question on such price rise. The Zonal Commissioner ordered all the staff of the Zonal Office also to contribute one day's salary. As the collector of the fund have had to return Kathmandu by next morning, a cheque was handed over to him by opening the office in the evening."¹⁴⁴

Reactions against Exploitation:- There was no dearth of writers or journalists who would raise voices against the royal family members even while the authoritation rule of the palace had been prevalent. Among the so many writers and journalists to raise such voices, the prominent one was Padam Thakuradi. This journalist was made to face bullet injury because of the exposure made by him serially in the weekly newspaper, *Saptahik Vimarsha*, in regard to the activities of the royal family members. The words of Thakuradi in this context are:-

"My main political goal was to attack the power elite. As a journalist, I wanted to expose the activities of the so-called constitutional elements, 'this gang of hooligans and smugglers in the palace, who actually run the politics of Nepal. So I made investigations and uncovered one story after another about the activities and dealings of these people both in money and in politics. They mainly wanted to control politics in order to continue their dubious business' undisturbed. I also brought the illegal acts of the royal family to light knowing that I broke the law in doing so. (After a long series there was an attempt on Thakuradi's life in the summer of late 1984.) It was a warm night, so my wife and I slept just under the open window in our bedroom. In the middle of the night my wife was woken by gunshot. The bullet hit me here. They thought they had killed me, but amazingly I survived."¹⁴⁵

The active involvement of the royal family members in the day-to-day administration of a large varieties of social and cultural organisations left a wrong impact to the general mass. Side by side this trend brought the royal family members in a situation of confrontation and conflict with the commoners. Moreover, the predominance of the royal family members in the organisations resulted in making personalities rather than issues and programmes the main deciding factors. The result was that no check and balance could be maintained in these organisations. The organisations turned out to be the corrupt institutions. This factor became one of the causes that made the people to rise against the palace when the popular uprising was

¹⁴⁴ *Saptahik Vimarsha*, (Kathmandu), February 18, 1994

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Reaper and Hoftun, f.n. No. 142, pp. 17-18

taking place in 1990. It was because of these reasons some of these social and religious organisations-- Social Service National Coordination Council and Pashupati Development Trust--after the restoration of democracy in 1990, were compelled to issue circular like:-

Circular from Social Services National Coordination Council

"Money received in grants and donations is used in welfare, service and development-oriented activities, and there has been no misuse of such money As the council and the coordinating committees (under it) are not implementing agencies in themselves but only play a coordinating role, they channel money received for the programme to the organisations concerned."¹⁴⁶

Circular from Pashupati Development Trust

"There is no provision for providing meeting allowances for office bearers of the governing council and executive committee."¹⁴⁷

Escalation of Violence

The political atmosphere did not change even after Birendra's accession to the throne of Nepal. No reforms were seen introduced by the new King as the people had expected. The Nepalese politics, in this way, remained stagnant. The speculation cherished by the change-seeking people proved premature when the King stated that the Panchayat System had "its roots deeply embeded in the Nepalese social mileau."¹⁴⁸

The King's assurance that the Panchayat polity is "not only dynamic but also capable of evolutionary growth and development,"¹⁴⁹ hardly satisfied the opponents of this system. They began to launch struggle against the system. The creation of Bangladesh on the recent past too added impetus for this struggle. Notwithstanding King Birendra's call for mutual goodwill and co-operation "the politics of violence escalated. This included terrorist activites ranging from bomb explosion to assassination, particularly in the Tarai district of Jhapa. Anti-Panchayat activities were intensified."¹⁵⁰

The political situation in Nepal from 1972 to 1975 was marked by tension in this way. The Naxalite activities made its appearance at different places. Bomb explosion, throwing of grenade at government establishments, raids of village, seizing of arms and ammunitions became the order of the day. "Even police stations were raided and policemen were assaulted. Hardly a week passed when news about new arrests, recovery of 'objectionable materials' did not appear in the press."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Shaha, f.n. No. 98, p. 225

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 225

¹⁴⁸ H.M. Birendra, f.n. No. 126, p. 35

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 35

¹⁵⁰ Verma, f. n. No 114, p. 31

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 35-36

Major Events During 1972 to 1975

Some of the major events that took place during the period of 1972 to 1975, according to Shaha, may be summed up as:-

- a. Sporadic uprising of peasants in the Tarai belt at Tama Garhi, Kul Jhora and Ramailo Jhora were suppressed by force.
- b. A number of Naxalite activists were taken prisoner and shot on 4 March 1973 on the pretext that they were trying to overpower the armed guards and escape.
- c. Four young Nepalis who had earlier been convicted for being caught with hand grenades in their possession and were serving life sentences in one of the Kathmandu prisons were shot dead on the night of 29 September 1974 under highly suspicious circumstances while being moved to another prison.
- d. At least two prominent leaders of the Nepali Congress were killed on Indian territory, allegedly by men of Nepali officials, with a revolver fitted with a silencer.
- e. There were incidents of popular violence also. In August 1972 there was an armed assault, allegedly by armed Nepali Congress volunteers from Indian territory, on a police sub-station in Haripur on the Nepali side of the border. It resulted in the death of a Nepali armed constable.
- f. On 10 June 1973, a Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation plane, *en route* to Kathmandu from Biratnagar, was hijacked by three young Nepali students and forced to land on a deserted airstrip at Farbesganj, a township in the Purnea district in the Indian state of Bihar, without any serious mishap except for the loss of three million Indian rupees belonging to Nepal's State Bank which it was carrying as freight.
- g. Another noteworthy incident was the burning on 9 July 1974 of Nepal's secretariat building called Singh Darbar.
- h. On 6 March 1974 there was hand-grenade explosion at Biratnagar. It took place a few yards away from where King Birendra was making an official visit of inspection of the local government offices. Two people killed. The king escaped unharmed.
- i. On 5 May 1974 a hand-grenade was hurled at the official car carrying the then Transport and Public Works Minister, P.R.S. Suwal, on one of the busy streets of Kathmandu. The minister was unhurt, though a few passers-by were injured.
- j. Government and popular violence reached its peak about the middle of December 1974. The official Nepali daily, *Gorkhapatra*, belatedly carried the following news item:
Sixteen anti-national elements were reported to have been killed

in an encounter with Security Forces at the Timura Bhot forest of the Okhaldhunga district on 16 December 1974. According to a spokesman of the Home Ministry, Captain Yagna Bahadur Thapa, who was the ring-leader of the gang of anti-national elements, had been captured by the police. He had been hiding after he sustained injuries in the encounter. Captain Yagna Bahadur Thapa had been implicated in the grenade explosion of 16 March at Biratnagar and a court case against him was pending."¹⁵²

Voices against Panchayat System

The events mentioned above made the political workers in Nepal to think Nepalese politics from another dimension. They began to visualise that the Panchayat System introduced in Nepal had not been in a position to win the people's confidence still then. So they raised voice demanding changes in the political system of Nepal. In September 1974 the second convention of the Back-to-the-Village,--National Campaign was organised in Kathmandu. This convention unanimously endorsed that

"The Panchayat system had not been able to mobilise resources for the development in the political and economic spheres. It was further accused of having failed to promote the institutional growth of national politics. The hope was expressed that the system would be changed to meet the aspirations and needs of the nation."¹⁵³

Similarly on October 1974, the meeting of the political elite held by former Prime Minister Tanka Prasad Acharya in Kathmandu came to conclusion that the Panchayat System had failed to fulfil the promise made by it in every sphere. The meeting also asked the government to bring necessary changes in the working style of the system and demanded "the immediate restoration of fundamental rights and release of political prisoners with a view to creating an atmosphere of freedom to assess public opinion in general on the nature or shape of changes needed in the constitution."¹⁵⁴

Composition of Constitutional Reforms Advisory Commission

On 9th February, 1975, the King's Principal Secretariat announced the composition of a Constitutional Reforms Advisory Commission. This commission, composed under former Chief Justice Anirudra Prasad Singh, was sent to different parts of the country to entertain and collect people's suggestions regarding reforms to be made in the constitution. At this time, the people suggested that some broad based measures be undertaken so as to ensure direct election and expansion of political freedoms and rights. The words of Shaha in this regard are:-

¹⁵² Shaha, f.n. No. 82, pp. 10-11

¹⁵³ Shaha, f. n. No. 87, p. 199

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 199

"Whatever the report submitted by the Commission to the King may have contained, the Commissioner's finding in various areas were published in the Kathmandu press itself. Even the reports of their findings published in such wide spectrum of the Kathmandu press as represented by the government-owned and financed Nepali daily newspaper, *Gorkhapatra*, and other pro-government papers, on the one hand, and by the banned Nepali weeklies, such as *Rastra Pukar*, *Samiksha*, *Matribhumi* (widely regarded as the organs of the banned Nepali Congress, the pro-Soviet Communist Party of Nepal and the pro-Chinese Communist Party of Nepal), on the other, there seemed a general consensus. This supported the holding of direct election to the national legislature from district on the basis of the universal adult suffrage. The need for a wider measure of personal freedom and fundamental rights, and initiative for political action also was widely felt. According to newspaper reports, demands were also voiced by the people for removal of restrictions on debate in national legislature, and for the opening of its regular sessions to the press and public."¹⁵⁵

Amendment of Constitution

The political atmosphere in India took a new turn when attempts were being made to bring about reforms in the constitution of Nepal. On 26th June, 1975, the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, declared emergency in India. While resorting her emergency powers, Mrs. Gandhi expressed a very similar statement which the late King Mahendra had expressed while imposing the *coup d'état* in 1960. This statement of Mrs. Gandhi made a great impact in the Nepalese politics too, say, on King Birendra policy. It was because of this reason the constitutional reforms, say, the second amendment of the constitution, declared by King Birendra on 12th December, 1975 could not bring any expected results. On the contrary, it expanded the palace authority in lieu of liberalising the political system of Nepal. The words of Agrawal in this context are:-

"King Birendra's much awaited constitutional reforms were announced on 12 December, 1975. Far reaching changes in the 13-year-old constitution of Nepal's partyless Panchayat set-up were promulgated by King Birendra. This is known as the 'Second Amendment' to the Constitution. It further increased the powers of the king and his total grip over the country's administration."¹⁵⁶

While declaring the second amendment, the King also stressed that changes have been brought about to make Panchas more active, just, disciplined and even of integrity and character. Some of the important reforms announced by the King are:-

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 205

¹⁵⁶ Agrawal, f.n. No. 90, p. 9

- "1. Setting up of a commission by the king as a constitutional organ for prevention of abuses of authority and check corruption through misuse of powers;
2. Opening up of the Rastriya Panchayat session to all;
3. Abolition of Graduates Constituency and limited activities of class organisations confined now to districts only. A new class called 'Adult Organisation' added;
4. The numbers in the Rastriya Panchayat increased from 90 to 135. The king to nominate 20 percent of the seats;
5. The franchise has been broadened up to District Assembly level. It means the Pradhan and Upapradhan Pancha will have the voting rights to the Rastriya Panchayat elections;
6. The power to recall any elected member of the Rastriya Panchayat; and
7. 'Back-to-the-Village National Campaign' has been elevated to constitutional status and its 'Central Committee will evaluate the work of the Panchas and can even deny tickets to them as approved by the king in case they have made no contribution to the Panchayat system.'¹⁵⁷

Activising Back-to-the Village,-- National Campaign

The most important factor of this amendment was to activise Back-to-the-Village,--National Campaign by making it the nerve-centre of the Panchayat System. Reshaping its structure, the central committee of this office was assigned the task of setting right the activities of the Panchayat System.

"(a) by removing inactive and hostile Panchas; (b) by activising Panchas so as to involve them in development activities; (c) by keeping close supervision and control over the activities of Panchayat members by vesting more power in the king and making the Panchas more loyal and responsible to him."¹⁵⁸

As a device, the central committee of the National Campaign was given constitutional status from this time onwards. The committee was authorised even to censor panchayat members and to make nomination of candidates for panchayat elections on the basis of their previous performance and sincerity. As regards the authority of this office, the words of Chaturvedi are:-

"In case the National Campaign Central Board submits a report to His Majesty, to the effect that any members of the National Panchayat have not acted in a manner befitting their posts, and in

case His Majesty approves the report, such members shall be regarded as having been expelled from the National Panchayat."¹⁵⁹

The amendment made the palace much more powerful. Even in this amendment, the King retained the power of appointing the prime minister and other ministers from among the members of the National Panchayat. The king was authorised to head the ministry in spite of the presence of the prime minister. He was in the position of appointing prime minister even to non-Panchayat member for a period of one year. The amendment made the King to decide on the composition, nature and functions of the National Campaign Central Board. The final decision regarding the expulsion of a member from the National Panchayat depended on the wish of the King. The King was also vested with tremendous power regarding amendment of the constitution. The only formality that he had to follow, while amending the constitution, was to consult the Special Committee. In this way the amending power rested virtually in the hands of the King.

Reactions against Amendment

Even after the amendment, the Panchayat System could not win over the confidence of the masses. It proved in no way helpful in fulfilling the people's aspirations. This made the political leaders like B.P. Koirala to remark:-

"The king himself has admitted that national existence is in jeopardy. The King hopes that the second amendment to the Constitution may save the country from that danger. In this context, the main question is -- What was it that caused the nation's existence to fall into danger? Is not the king responsible for landing the country in crisis by setting up a tyrannical system in the name of Panchayat and by destroying the political rights of the people completely? It is our considered opinion that the rule by peremptory and pre-emptory command (hukumi raj) is leading the country to the abyss of degradation and destruction. If the king has wanted to amend this constitution with the development of the country in heart, the reforms would have been democratic. The king has put his interests above those of this country in promulgating these constitutional amendments."¹⁶⁰

Similarly, the views of Rajeshwar Devkota, former chairman of the National Panchayat, and the leftist leader Man Mohan Addhikari, as regards this amendment, were 'political corruption'¹⁶¹ and 'betrayal of the people'¹⁶² respectively.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 122

¹⁶⁰ Shaha, f.n. No. 87, p. 210

¹⁶¹ Lok Raj Baral, *Nepal's Politics of Referendum*, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1983, p. 23

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p. 23

The amendment made the traditional institutions and the Panchayat bureaucracy more authoritative and unbirdled. The Back-to-the-Village---National Campaign proved to be more or less the King's political party. The privileges enjoyed by its members were next to the King and the royal family members. It was because of this reason writers like Chaturvedi were compelled to comment:-

"It had unchallenged rights of the amendment of the constitution. The salary of the members was not subject to annual appropriation by the legislature. The BVNC (Back-to-the Village-- National Campaign) involved the King in the national politics as an active contestant which affected his position of unity and impartiality adversely."¹⁶³

It was because of unbridled powers enjoyed by the National Campaign Committee, the politically conscious people, specially the Panchas, were disturbed. They began to seek opportunity so that the Panchayat System may be eliminated from the country.

External Pressure for Liberalisation

The political atmosphere in Nepal began to take reverse course with the new wind blowing outside the country. The human right issue was gaining momentum in the United States of America with President Jimmy Carter blowing it high. The thirty years long Congress rule in India had come to an end when the Janata Party won the massive electoral battle. Morarji Desai had taken over the role of new prime minister of India in 1977. Jaiprakash Narayan, the most prominent leader of the Janata Party, had appealed King Birendra to release Koirala from jail. B.P. Koirala, along with his colleague Ganesh Man Singh and others, were arrested at the airport when they arrived Kathmandu from Patna by plane on 30th December, 1976. According to the official news agency RSS, the local administration took them under custody for necessary action because they were responsible for perpetrating anti-national activities and acts of violence at different zones of the country.

In the statement of 11th April, 1977, Narayan had maintained that "people everywhere have an inherent right to fight for their basic rights. A stage has been reached in world history when all institutions like monarchy or colonial rule or any form of totalitarianism have given place to a rule which represents and meets the aspirations of the people."¹⁶⁴ The other Janata Party leaders like Ram Dhan and Krishna Kant endorsed the appeal of Narayan with the words:- "though the government may have limitations the Janata Party which was born as a result of common struggle for human rights and civil liberties, stood fully behind the 17 year old struggle of the Nepalese people

¹⁶³ Chaturvedi, f.n. No. 92, p. 126

¹⁶⁴ Agrawal, f.n. No. 90, p. 112

for human rights."¹⁶⁵ The other thirty four Indian parliamentarians also appealed to the King to release B.P. Koirala saying that they were activated to do so by an urge to protect human rights whenever they are in jeopardy. The outside pressure like these compelled King Birendra to release B.P. Koirala on medical grounds. On June 8, 1977, B.P. Koirala, who was being tried in a court under the Treason (Crime and Punishment) Act, was released on parole.

The story did not end with Mr. Koirala's release from detention. While returning from the United States after his medical treatment, he stayed in India where he conferred with the leaders of the Janata Party like Jayaprakash Narayan and Chandra Shekar. The Janata government accorded him a warm welcome as usual. And the president of the Janata Party, Chandra Shekhar, urged King Birendra to negotiate with the Nepali Congress leader B.P. Koirala on the matter of reconciliation which the HMG/Nepal took very exceptionally. In this way, the "Indian leaders, a few of them aggressively, were apparently favouring a change in Nepal's status quo in order to accomodate Nepali Congress led by B. P. Koirala, which, they thought could be a genuine representative of the democratic force in Nepal."¹⁶⁶

Students on Protest March

The democratic euphoria in India in this way had its echo in the popular democratic nostalgia of Nepal. The movement of the opposition leaders within the country and their contact with the masses helped somewhat to relax the political situation in the country. The relaxation of the situation emboldened other oppositional forces too and thus it helped to generate internal contradiction within the partyless camp. The fall of the Shah of Iran at this time under the Khomēni waves also added extra strength to this situation of Nepal. The Panchayat leaders found themselves uncertain in regard to the steps to be undertaken in the changing environment. Meanwhile the students of Tribhuvan University took the hanging of Pakistan's former Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as an excuse. To quote Baral

"It was ironic that only a few months before, they could not protest against the killing of the two Nepali Congress activists after they were found guilty of anti-state activities by a tribunal. Bhutto became a martyr simply because the students wanted to register their protest against the death penalty."¹⁶⁷

On 6th April, 1979, the Nepalese students arranged a protest march against the execution of Pakistan Premier Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. They also began to protest against the government of Nepal for the execution of Captain Yagna Bahadur Thapa and Bhim Narayan Shrestha. The protest march took a violent turn. Resenting police atrocities, they put forward twenty points' demand for educational reforms. The police crushed the demonstration

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 112

¹⁶⁶ Baral, f.n. No. 35, p. 38

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 39

mercilessly. The result was that unrest began to spread on other parts of the country and sparked off strikes and protests too. Later on the demands took the form of political movement in which the common mass too joined their hands with the students. The movement swelled into a large gathering and turned into a major demonstration on 23rd May. The crowd went to different parts of the capital, setting fire to several buildings like that of Gorkhapatra Sansthan, Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation and others on the way. In this way, the agitation of the students culminated as a nationwide movement.

Declaration of Referendum

The students' movement pressurised King Birendra to think from a new approach. The wind blowing from outside too added strength to this changing attitude of the King. The result was that King Birendra was compelled to test Panchayat system's popularity through a referendum. As regards the referendum declaration, the words spoken by King Birendra on 24th May, 1979, run as:-

"It has always been a tradition and duty with Us to consider the affairs of the State in consonance with the wishes of our people. We therefore proclaim hereby that in view of the situation as it obtains in the country today, in order to explicitly understand the kind of change our countrymen desire, we shall arrange to hold a national referendum on the basis of adult franchise through secret ballot. In this referendum, all eligible citizens will be asked to vote on one of the two choices: Whether we should retain the Panchayat system with suitable reforms or whether we should set up a multi-party system of government."¹⁶⁸

And accordingly the referendum was held on 2nd May, 1980. The Election Commission took twelve days to announce the results. The delay gave rise to all kinds of rumours and suspicion.

Effect of Referendum

The referendum result, declared on 14th May, 1980, was not favourable for the multi-party side. The multi-party side lost referendum by securing 45.3 percent as against 54.7 percent of the partyless Panchayat System. The multi-party leaders were bewildered by the result because they had not expected such a result. In spite of their doubt that the government had rigged referendum result in favour of the partyless Panchayat System, they were not in a position to initiate any further step immediately. So they remained silent for the time being and began to watch what the King would do to keep his promise in reforming the Panchayat System.

The victory in referendum made the palace much more assertive. It took the silent attitude of the multi-party leaders as their weakness. It forgot

the very promise which it had made in reforming the Panchayat System. Excepting the adult franchise, nothing was done to liberalise the existing system. With the third amendment of the constitution, the palace authority was enhanced furthermore. As a result Prime Ministers like Surya Bahadur Thapa and Lokendra Bahadur Chand, although being elected and supported by the majority in the national legislature, could not resist the palace pressure. They were ousted from the post of Prime Minister. Taking such a situation as an opportunity, the multi-party leaders launched silent as well as violent demonstrations time and again. Although the demonstrations did not succeed in the beginning, i. e., 1985, it could dismantle the very system in 1990 even by launching an ordinary movement.

Over Expansion of Palace Authority

Following referendum results, the King proclaimed third amendment in the constitution. The amendment brought forth certain minor changes so that the Panchayat System may appear like a democratic system representing parliamentary democracy. Even after the amendment, the position of the King remained as an absolute ruler. The King was able to dismiss the elected Prime Minister as well as presiding officer of the legislature. Although, the amendment refused to lift ban on political parties, it seemed to bring certain changes. In order to give a facade of democracy, the amendment made the parliament, Rashtriya Panchayat, to be elected on the basis of adult franchise. From now on, the cabinet was to be elected by, and be responsible to, the parliament. In spite of such face lifts, the King still held on the absolute power and could interfere in government affairs. Members of the opposition were barred to become parliament members by making them compulsory to become the members of the Class Organisations.

The amendment also made a provision for a political body named as a Panchayat Policy and Evaluation Committee. It was a very powerful body embracing wide ranges of powers. Its actions were beyond the jurisdiction of the court of law. With the provision of this body, the King was opportuned to interfere in the national politics in a highly authoritative manner. The committee was invested with the power to check and control the members of parliament within the limits of Panchayat System. The members of the committee were nominated personally by the King and the chairman of the committee was fixed as the chairman of the Rastriya Panchayat. In this way, it appeared as a toned down version of 'Back to the Village National Campaign' and worked as Nepal's politburo.

The other important feature of this amendment was the provision for a Co-ordination Council. The main function of this council was to bring coordination between the executive, legislative, judicial and other functions. By bringing co-ordination in this way, this council was to preserve national independence, sovereignty and integrity of the country by ensuring security, order, peace and justice. The working of the council was to be approved by the King and could not be challenged in any court of law. In this way, the

cabinet was kept as a body subordinate to this council.

The amendment, which was the result of referendum, did not bring about any expected reforms. On the contrary, the clock was turned back. Reactionary forces used these constitutional bodies for their own selfish ends. The reactionary forces who were closer to the King exerted much more power and controlled the activities of the government. As they remained as a power clique hidden behind closed doors, they were referred in hushed voice by different names such as 'Bhumigat Giroh' ('Underground Elements'), the palace or even as the *Mandales*.

Encroachment upon Nepalese Politics

After the third amendment, the general election was held in Nepal once more on the basis of adult franchise. The political parties already being banned, there was no organised political platforms, programmes and campaigns. The result was that the general election too could not generate enthusiasm and zeal among the people. In order to display their negative attitude towards the system, the people in the heart of the capital cast their sweeping vote in favour of an ignorant and illiterate woman, Nani Maiya Dahal. They sent her as their representative to the national legislature. Thus this polity produced people's representatives without any distinct philosophy, clear vision for social transformation and development. These aimless representatives became just the tools in the hand of the King and thus the popular will was thwarted.

Even after the election results, the palace began to encroach upon Nepalese politics. The result was that the first popularly elected Prime Minister of the Panchayat System, Surya Bahadur Thapa, also had to suffer ousting from his position. But before ousting Thapa from prime ministership, some intrigues were hatched and a vote of no-confidence was also raised in the parliament. The members whose support he had got previously were badly pressed by the palace to vote against him. This made Prime Minister Thapa to use harsh words against the motion and say: "The no-confidence motion was brought in a light fashion as an ordinary public speech and for this an artificial atmosphere was created."¹⁶⁹ Undaunted by the no-confidence motion raised in that way, he remained adamant and "decided to face it up to the last stage of the constitutional process."¹⁷⁰ While doing so, he declined to comply with the advice of his friends that he should resign from his post.

Surya Bahadur Thapa was the first Prime Minister of the Panchayat System popularly elected by the national legislature. He knew that he could be sacked any moment from his post as and when he would not be able to carry out the wishes of the palace. So he remained prepared since the initial phase. He took the members of National Panchayat into his confidence and

¹⁶⁹ *The Rising Nepal*, (Kathmandu), July 12, 1983
¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*

asked them to help him at the time of crisis. A lot of members in National Panchayat also had assured him of their support. But, before the strategy of the palace, the words of National Panchayat members did not work. They succumbed before the palace strategy and went in favour of the palace. Prime Minister Thapa was defeated in the no-confidence motion. Reeper and Hoftun quoting the words of Thapa in this context write:- "The members whose support I had were badly pressed by the palace to vote against me."¹⁷¹ In this way, the palace succeeded in its mission making the third amendment of the constitution to lose all practical relevance.

Following Surya Bahadur Thapa's ouster, Lokendra Bahadur Chand became the prime minister of Nepal. For the power elite of the palace, Chand was a safe choice. But Chand too proved to be an independent member for them very soon. So he too was ousted from the position of prime minister after the second direct election of 1986. A study of these events is sure to reveal how the last prime minister of Panchayat System, Marich Man Singh Shrestha, too came to power the same way as Lokendra Bahadur Chand had come. He secured majority vote in the National Panchayat even though everybody knew that the majority were really behind Rajeshwar Devakota, the other Prime Ministerial candidate.

Launching of Satyagraha and Explosion of Bombs

The authoritarian rule imposed by the palace under the shadow of Panchayat System was threatened time and again even after the third amendment. In the name of threat, the outlawed Nepali Congress launched a week-long *satyagraha* in Kathmandu and in several other towns on May 23, 1985 and asked the government to lift ban on the political parties and restore fundamental rights. The government tried to foil the *satyagraha* by detaining the topmost leaders of the Nepali Congress, Ganesh Man Singh, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Girija Prasad Koirala, Mahendra Narayan Nidhi and others. Despite such detention, the *satyagraha* did not stop. It continued for a long time under the second rank leaders like Marshal Julum Shakya and Bal Bahadur K.C.. In the morning of June 5, the *satyagraha* was given the name of Traffic Jam Programme. The workers of the programme tried to obstruct the government work by lying themselves on the road. Similarly they arranged another programmes for June 6, 7 and 9 known as Picketing and Civil Civil Disobedience. This made the government to arrest a large number of Nepali Congress workers. "The number of arrested workers, as the Nepali Congress reports, exceeded 6199 throughout the kingdom."¹⁷² The programme did not come to a haltage even after such arrests. But the Nepali Congress was compelled to call off its programmes because of the bomb blasts following King Birendra's address to the nation on 19th June, 1985. The opening paragraph of the King's address "would have convinced those who had set in

¹⁷¹ Reeper and Hoftun, f.n. No. 42, p.16
¹⁷² *Naya Nepal Post*, (Kathmandu), June 6, 1985

place the network of explosive devices that they were right in their belief that only violence would bring about significant political change,"¹⁷³ and the opening paragraph runs as:-

"As in the past years, we are happy to address the present session of the Rastriya Panchayat. The Nepalese people are determined to discourage any attempt to undermine peace and order in the country. It becomes the bounden duty of all Panchas to counter those who seek to create an atmosphere of instability in the country by spreading unnecessary confusion about the system chosen by the people themselves in free exercise of will. Maintaining peace and order in the country, my government has formulated the following programme for the coming year as a part of the process of establishing a society envisioned by the partyless democratic panchayat system."¹⁷⁴

At this time, the threat to authoritarian rule of the palace made its appearance by the explosion of bombs at different places of the country like Pokhara, Kathmandu and Bhairahawa. "On 20th June bombs were exploded at various places in Kathmandu, namely, the western and southern gates of Royal Palace, the main gate of National Panchayat Secretariat, Singh Darbar and the reception hall of Hotel Annapurna."¹⁷⁵ There were similar explosions at Dhangadhi and Bhairahawa. As regards the incident, Home Minister Jog Meher Shrestha reports to the National Panchayat:-

"At the National Panchayat Building in Kathmandu, National Panchayat member Dambar Jung Gurung and Bishnu Prasad Duwadi, an accountant, were killed instantly, while National Panchayat members Janak Bahadur Shah, Dip Bahadur Singh and Bhola Man Singh were injured and admitted to the Bir Hospital. Sixteen persons were injured at the Hotel Annapurna, four of whom have since died. In Bhairahawa, three persons were injured and are being treated at the local hospital."¹⁷⁶

These incidents brought shock waves throughout the country. As a result, the Nepali Congress was compelled to call off their *satyagraha* against the government which they had started only a few weeks back.

On June, 1985, the Janawadi Morcha (People's Front), the party of Ram Raja Prasad Singh, claimed in New Delhi that he had carried out the bomb attack. The People's Front stated that in the initial phase it had planted fifty bombs in an attempt to topple monarchy, to install democratic republic and also to abolish private property. In this way, for the first time in the political history of Nepal, Ram Raja Prasad Singh was found to advocate the abolition of monarchy as a solution to all the ills of Nepal.

¹⁷³ Shaha, f.n. No. 13, p. 148 Shaha, f.n. No. 13, p. 148

¹⁷⁴ *The Rising Nepal*, (Kathmandu), July 20, 1985

¹⁷⁵ *Gorkhapatra*, (Kathmandu), June 21, 1985

¹⁷⁶ *The Rising Nepal*, (Kathmandu), June 21, 1985

Immediately after Mr. Singh's claim, a rumour was found to be circulated in Kathmandu. The rumour claimed the palace people as the main culprits to plant bomb explosions. According to the rumour, King Birendra's brother Prince Gyanendra and his henchmen had planted these bombs with a view to stop the *satyagraha* launched by the Nepali Congress. The rumour came to circulation because of the murder of Baidya Nath Gupta, a close associate of Ram Raja Prasad Singh, a few days after Mr. Singh's claim. Dr. Kashi Raj Upadhyaya also traces the involvement of the palace in this event and writes:-

"Ram Raja Prasad is not the person to arrange bomb explosion. The main culprit behind the explosion is Ranjan Raj Khanal, the then Principal Secretary to His Majesty the King. Poor Ram Raja is just a tool used by Ranjan Raj by providing him the money.--I have expressed this matter time and again by writing or by my statements."¹⁷⁷

Joint Campaign and National Conference

After the bomb explosions, the political scenario of Nepal subsided for a certain years. About four years later, the scenario murmured again in the year 1989 when the Nepali Congress organised the programme of 'Political Awakening Week' from 9th to 15th September. At that time, the Kathmandu District Committee of the Nepali Congress had planned to submit a memorandum to the Zonal Commissioner in Kathmandu complaining against the shortage of essential commodities and unprecedented rise in prices. Although the programme did not succeed in its mission, it helped to usher an alliance between the Nepali Congress and the Communist forces who were at loggerheads for a long time in regard to the goals to be attained by them. At this time, the two forces joined hands in launching a joint campaign demanding sweeping changes in the authoritarian Panchayat System. President Mikhail Gorbachov's policy of glasnost (openness) and prestroika (restructuring the economy along the free market oriented lines) in Soviet Union also facilitated to bring these two opposing forces together.

After joining hands in this way, these two forces issued an ultimatum to King Birendra asking him to bring major political reforms before 18th January. And accordingly, a joint co-ordination committee was formed with the representatives of both of these parties. On 10th January, seven different communist parties joined hands to create a United Left Front. Sahana Pradhan, late comrade Puspa Lal Shrestha's widow, took leadership of this Front and declared her commitment for restoring democracy and multi-party system. When these forces found the ultimatum unheeded, they organised a three-day National Conference at the Congress leader Ganesh Man Singh's residence at Chhetrapati on 18th January. Contrary to the general speculation, they did not find the authorities preventing them from such a

move. The programme was arranged by hoisting the party flag. The opening session of this programme "was attended by 3500 delegates and 1500 observers from seventy one districts of the country."¹⁷⁸ Among them were the party delegates of both the Nepali Congress and Communist forces. The other were the human right activists, press reporters, general public and invited guests from different spheres. These guests had represented mostly the Indian political parties namely the Janata Dal, Congress [I], the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India [Marxist]) and the members of American and West German embassies. The Indian delegation was led by Chandrashekhar of Janata Dal and consisted of M.J. Akbar and Harish Rawat of the Congress (I), M. Farouki of the C.P.I and Harikishan Singh Surjit of the C.P.I.(M). At this session, messages of felicitations and good wishes were read out from the socialist parties of Japan, Finland, Spain and West Germany. Among them were included the messages of the British Labour Party, Willy Brandt, and the president of Congress(I) and a couple of other Indian missions.

The conference decided to restore democracy by launching a peaceful movement one month later, say, on 18th February. The leaders from the Indian political parties, who had attended the conference, too supported this decision very openly. Chandrashekhar the leading figure of the then ruling Janata Dal who later became the Prime Minister of India assured the conference of their support. Addressing the conference, he also observed that

"Let there be no doubt about it, democracy will not come to Nepal from India and it is not something that India can give to Nepal. But as a neighbour, India will support the movement for democracy in Nepal. On the question of democracy and human rights, we stand by the side of the people of Nepal."¹⁷⁹

He furthermore added by saying to the delegates that "fear was their greatest problem, that no man should consider himself a god, and that they should take courage from the overthrow of tyrants like Ceausescu, Marcos and the Shah of Iran."¹⁸⁰

Worsening Political Situation

During these days, the political situation was turning from bad to worse. The corruption rampant within the Panchayat system caused the people to become deeply illusioned with the then political system. Lack of freedom, on the other hand, made the newly educated people to turn their attention to an another system. The 1986 revolution in Philippines and the people's uprising against Ferdinand Marcos had given them heart that something similar might come about in Nepal too. The intra-rivalry

¹⁷⁸ *Rastapukar Weekly*, (Kathmandu), January 25, 1990

¹⁷⁹ Shaha, f.n. No. 13, p. 184

¹⁸⁰ M.D. Dharamdasani (ed.), *Democratic Nepal*, (Varanasi: Shalimar Publishing House, 1992), p. 1

differences among the political leaders of Panchayat System also helped to turn the situation much more worse. Consequently, by the end of 1989, Nepal found numerous open rallies organised by members of opposition groups. The groups which arranged such rallies represented the politicians victimised by the Panchayat System the one or the other way. Among them were the former Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa, the Prime Ministerial candidate Rajeshwar Devkota etc too. But these groups condemned both the government and the party led opposition.

As regards these open rallies, the words of Sharma run as:-

"Even on the eve of the movement, the deprived upper level Panchas flocked together, as a dissident group against the Marichman government and showed tacit support to the funeral procession of the effigy of the Panchayat System at the fall of 1989. Accompanying the upper level Panchas, the lower level district, urban, rural and quasi-panchas one after another, encouraged the anti-Panchayat movement. The 24 members of the district assembly of Chitwan District had tabled a resolution demanding the abolition of Panchayat System and restoration of MPS (Multy Party System)."¹⁸¹

The other factor that helped to make the situation worse was the shortage of essential commodities due to the Indian embargo on trade since about a year. Thus the pro-democracy movement was being launched at a time when the country was facing unfavourable situation both at home and abroad. It was because of this worsening situation, the outlawed political leaders and the people of Nepal had expected that the King would announce necessary reforms in the existing political system of Nepal. The expectations cherished by them proved futile and failure when they found the King adamant in listening to the words of change. The King did not refer to any change to be brought forth for reforming the system on the important occasions like Constitution Day of 16th December, 1989, and Democracy Day of 18th February, 1990. Had the King given a hint for political reforms on either of these two days, the course of events would have changed. It was really surprising that King Birendra, who had announced unexpected referendum in 1979, remained adamant at this time. He was overconfident that he could overcome the people's movement by resorting to other means. Hence, instead of assuring to bring reforms in the political system, attempts were made to counter the people's movement by organising pancha rally and also by providing extra facilities to panchayat workers. As regards the pancha rally organised at Kathmandu valley, the official news agency Rastriya Samachar Samiti reports:-

"A mammoth pancha rally dedicated to the nation, nationalism and crown was organised today under the joint auspices of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur District Panchayats. About two hundred

thousand people, including the Panchas, workers of all class organisations, social organisation workers and various other individuals from the three districts in Kathmandu Valley and Kabhre, Nuwakot, Dhading and Sindhupalchowk districts in Bagmati Zone, and Makwanpur district in Narayani Zone, participated in the rally."¹⁸²

In the words of *Dristi Weekly*, the procession comprised only 20,000 people most of whom were the Indian and Tibetan workers engaged in the brick and carpet factories. It added further that about 500 trucks and buses had been used for bringing the participants from outside Kathmandu. Similarly the *Samaj* reports in regard to extra facilities provided to the panchayat workers with the words:-

"The District Panchayat Chairmen will now be paid a monthly allowance of Rs. 2500 in lieu of Rs. 1200. Similarly the District Panchayat Vice Chairmen will be paid a monthly allowance of Rs. 1500. In addition, the HMG has decided to issue special passports to District Panchayat Chairman for visiting foreign countries. Provision also has been made to reserve two seats in each Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation's flight for local District Panchayat. A separate Panchayat Service will be formed and all the posts in District Panchayats will be placed under that service. Facilities and allowances of all Panchas (up to the level of Town Assembly Member) are being increased too."¹⁸³

Launching of Pro-democracy Movement

On 18th February, 1990, on the day fixed for launching pro-democracy movement, 10,000 students and their sympathisers appeared at the streets of New Road in Kathmandu. Carrying banners and party flags in their hands, they began to shout 'We want democracy; Down with the fascist Panchayat system.' As the official procession celebrating Democracy Day approached near, they began to throw stones and bricks at the official parade. The prime minister and other leaders, the leading figures of procession, were forced to retreat for safety. There were clashes between the police and the anti-Panchayat protestors around New Road, Indra Chowk, Asan and Putali Sadak in Kathmandu. The police used *lathis* and tear-gas in order to break up the bunches of shouting and stone throwing demonstrators. If one group was dispersed, another cluster appeared not far off. Thus the policemen had to chase one group after another for the whole day.

That very afternoon, a large excited crowd gathered themselves outside the Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation building at the heart of the city. The crowd tried to spill into Open Theatre but were prevented by the police. The crowd, carrying party flags, shouted slogans and distributed leaflets to

¹⁸² *The Rising Nepal*, (Kathmandu), January 29, 1990

¹⁸³ *Samaj Daily*, (Kathmandu), February 1, 1990

bystanders. Suddenly, they found the white puffs of tear gas throwing unto them by the police. The police had also unleashed the fierce blow of batons unto the demonstrators. As a result, several people were injured but the police were outnumbered and, that is why, they could not disperse the crowd. In the process of demonstration, the crowd collided with the official Democracy Day procession. As skirmishes too broke out, the government group constrained to disintegrate.

Clashes between Police and Demonstrators

For the rest of the day, clashes between the police and demonstrators erupted all over the capital. There had been clashes on other parts of the country too. To quote the reports of the official news agency, RSS

" On February 18, some extremists threw stones and brickbats at the King Tribhuvan Memorial and National Democracy Day processions in Kathmandu, Palpa, Hetauda and Bharatpur. In Kathmandu, seven participants were injured near Pakopokhaldyang and Khichapokhari. The police then dispersed the extremists and brought the situation under control. In Hetauda, three police constables were injured and one of them, Punya Adhikari, later died at the local hospital. At Rampur (Palpa) and Bharatpur (Chitwan) also, some policemen were injured when extremists attacked them with brickbats and set fire to a pick-up van. The police fired in the air at both these places to disperse the mob."¹⁸⁴

In fact, there had been massive anti-Panchayat demonstrations at Bharatpur and Narayanghat. The administration had lost control over the situation despite the police firing and the death of a dozen of people. Several dead bodies were found lying uncared for on the edge of the forests besides the road of Hetauda. On 18th February, several encounters had taken place at Hetauda between the police and enraged protesters in which some vehicles were set ablaze.

Continuation of Pro-democracy Movement

From the day of 18th February, 1990 onwards, the pro-democracy movement continued almost daily in one or the other way. The movement took fifty one days for its ending. Within that period, various programmes were launched in the country by the demonstrators of pro-democracy movement. The programmes launched in this way included work stoppage of the professional people, slogan-shouting processions, street-corner meetings. In the meetings, condolence also were expressed in the name of those who died in the encounter. Burning of the Prime Minister's effigy, *Hartals*, *Banda* programmes, processions, blackouts and other were the activities of the people.

The programmes which began in this way took the form of agitation on various parts of the country like a wild fire. In connection with the agitation, the demonstrators also circulated posters asking the King to restore

¹⁸⁴ *Nepal Press Digest*, (Kathmandu: Nepal Press Digest (Pvt.) Ltd., 1990), p. 64

democracy. On the posters circulated by them were written if the King did not restore democracy, he will have to meet the fate of Nicolae Ceaucescu, the Roman dictator, who had recently been executed.

The government, specially the palace, remained adamant in listening to the voice of the demonstrators. It tried to initiate stern action against the demonstrators since the initial phase. It resorted force to suppress the demonstrators from the very beginning. The result was that twelve people were killed and fifty-four injured in the clash with the police by the end of the first week. While resorting to force, the police was found to use dum dum bullets, the bullets which were already banned by the international convention.

Professional Groups against Government

The different professional groups got agitated when they learnt that the government had resorted to the use of banned dum dum bullets. They took that matter as the violation of human rights. Hence they also staged demonstrations against the government for violating human rights. The Nepalese history records the demonstrations of the professional groups as the first of its own kind. As regards these demonstrations, the local newspapers in Kathmandu write:-

- a. "The teachers of three schools in Kathmandu boycotted their classes on 4 th March protesting against the arrest of one of their colleagues."¹⁸⁵
- b. "On March 5, about 350 legal practioners, protesting against the violation of human rights, staged a one-hour sit-down at the premises of the Supreme Court."¹⁸⁶
- c. "On March 5, the students of the Sanskrit School at Ranipokhari in Kathmandu boycotted their classes in protest against the arrest of their teacher."¹⁸⁷
- d. "On March 8, about 1000 women, wearing black bands on their arms, held a protest meeting at the premises of Padma Kanya Campus. The speakers denounced the beastly action initiated against women at Pokhara. They also denounced the violent attack launched against the peaceful demonstrators and also demanded the restoration of multy-party system. At this time seven women were arrested."¹⁸⁸
- e. "The Nepal National Teachers' Organisation submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister protesting against the government policy of resorting violence and bloodshed to the ongoing peaceful march by lelabelling imaginary charges. They demanded the release of all the arrested teachers and students and also asked for a clean academic atmosphere."¹⁸⁹
- f. "The publishers, editors and managers of 40 literary and other magazines denounced the government's attempts to suppress the voice for timely

¹⁸⁵ *Samaj Daily*, (Kathmandu), March 6, 1990

¹⁸⁶ *Naya Nepal Daily*, (Kathmandu), March 6, 1990

¹⁸⁷ *Hindu Weekly*, (Kathmandu), March 6, 1990

¹⁸⁸ *Samalochana Daily*, (Kathmandu), March 9, 1990

¹⁸⁹ *Matribhumi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), March 6, 1990

change, and warned that 'the situation may become fearsome if the policy (of suppression) is continued.'¹⁹⁰

- g. "The official Nepal Primary Teachers Organisation and Nepal Secondary Teachers Association, and the Nepal National Teachers Organisation formed a joint committee under the chairmanship of Devi Prasad Ojha to extend support to the pro-democracy movement. They also announced a programme for this purpose among which one was to launch a nation wide teachers strike on May 4, 1990.¹⁹¹
- h. "An extraordinary general meeting of the Nepal Chartered Accountants' Association, held in Kathmandu on 30th March, unanimously expressed solidarity with the pro-democracy movement. The meeting also demanded to bring an end to repression and killings and to make a search for peaceful solution and to release all the detainees including its president, Kuber Sharma."¹⁹²

Target against Palace

In spite of the protests of so many days and demonstrations of professional groups, the government, specially the palace, was not in a mood to change its attitude. Ignoring the voice of demonstrators, the King in his speech to the people of Western Development Region, on 16th March, 1990, recalled the result of 1980 referendum and voiced that the Panchayat System had a firm democratic base within the country. The royal address of 16th March did nothing to appease the demonstrators. So the demonstrators continued their protest unabated. The support of the writers, artists, teachers, students and others added extra impetus in boosting the morale of these demonstrators. Now the demonstrators began to make their target specially against the palace or the royalty. In that context, posters were used on the walls of the Tribhuvan University and the Teaching Hospital which read as Nepal could survive without the King and Queen; it would not survive without the people. Similarly, rumours were circulated regarding the alleged greediness of the royalties. The rumours spread the tales that the royalties had sold their Nagarjun property to HMG which it gave back again to the royalties as a present...; that the King and Queen received Rs 100,000 each as the travelling allowances while they were on tour to different development regions, in addition to their free housing, food, servant and helicopter travel etc.. The other rumour was that the palace has almost bankrupted the government making it to borrow loan from the State bank (Rastra Bank) to pay salaries to the government staff. The main target at this time was Queen Aishwarya and the brothers of King Birendra.

By the end of March, the protest-demonstration spread furthermore. The whole of Kathmandu district along with its neighbouring areas plunged into darkness periodically. It was the result of the voluntary blackout orchestrated by the pro-democracy movement. Moreover, Patan, the

¹⁹⁰ *Nepal Press...*, f.n. No. 58, p. 95

¹⁹¹ *Saptahik Nepali Awaj*, (Kathmandu), April 6, 1990

¹⁹² *Samalochana Daily*, (Kathmandu), April 4, 1990

neighbouring towns of Kathmandu, was under the seize of the people. The other neighbouring towns of Kathmandu-- Bhaktapur and Kirtipur-- had already seen heavy clashes with the police. At that time more and more schools and colleges also were closed, not just on the valley, but also in Janakpur, Biratnagar and elsewhere.

The first fortnight of April 1990 proved to be a very crucial period for the palace. The law and order situation in the country had deteriorated to the maximum. The government had lost its control even on Patan, the neighbouring city of the capital. The people there had taken law and order in their hands by placing guards on every corners of the streets. By 3rd April, Patan was totally cut off from the rest of the country. Trenches had been dug in all the streets leading to the centre of the town. Local guards carrying *Khukri* (curved knives) and spears were barring the entry of the police. At a meeting organised in the heart of Patan, the leftist leader Siddhi Lal Singh Shrestha and the Nepali Congress leader Omkar Lal Shrestha had pointed out how the time has come when the King was to declare whether he was for the people or against the people?

The deteriorating situation of law and order in the country remained intact even on the 4th and 5th days of April. This made the King to change his authoritarian attitude. On the morning of 6th April, 1990, the King announced the formation of a new cabinet under the premiership of Lokendra Bahadur Chand. The new cabinet was entrusted with the task of initiating talks with the leaders of the banned parties, conduct an enquiry into the killings at pro-democracy movement and set up a constitution amendment commission. The King's announcement for reforms did not elicit satisfaction among the people. The announcement had become too late at that time.

Total Strike

On 6th April, the United National People's Movement, a communist united front not aligned with the Nepali Congress and the United Left Front alliance, had called a total strike in Nepal. Following this call, no vehicles, excepting a few government owned buses, were seen in the streets of Kathmandu. Most of the shops did not open their shutters. The normal life remained stand and still. By the midday, the people of Bhaktapur, Patan and Kirtipur thronged at Kathmandu in tens of thousands. "The Kathmandu valley people were on the move, the inhabitants of Kirtipur amongst the most militant, seeking to avenge the amputation of noses 225 years ago by the King's forefather."¹⁹³ The crowd was estimated to be around half a million, the largest ever gathering in Nepal's political history. The crowd converged on the street close to the Royal Palace shouting derogatory slogans against King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya.¹⁹⁴

The outburst of the crowd at this time was out of control. The crowd took the form of a popular uprising and began to march hither and thither.

¹⁹³ Shaha, f.n. No. 98, pp. 207-8

¹⁹⁴ Old Borre, Sushil R. Pandey and Chitra K. Tiwari, *Nepalese Political Behaviour*, (New Delhi: Sterling Private Limited, 1994), p. 33

While on their way towards the palace

"The demonstrators were fired at by the riot police killing nine persons (by official count) at Durbar Marg, less than two minutes' walk from the Royal Palace as the crowd swelled and moved towards the Royal Palace. The death toll was estimated to be as high as 500, but the interim government that was established in the aftermath of the uprising was able to find names of only 60 persons killed during the people's movement. On the other day of the uprising, the Royal Palace was heavily guarded by army units with armoured personal carriers and mounted heavy machine guns. The king was said to be panicking inside the palace where it is said that a helicopter was ready to fly the Royal family to an unknown destination."¹⁹⁵

On the day of 6th April, violence erupted in Kathmandu. The protestors attacked some of the building of the government as well as of the Panchayat elites. According to Shaha

"Building of the City Panchayat, Gorkhapatra Corporation, the ministries of Industry and Commerce were attacked with stones or bricks, and attempts were made to set some on fire. A large shopping and office building in Putali Sadak belonging to a brother-in-law of the king, Kumar Mohan Bahadur Sahi, had most of its windows smashed when the protesters believed that the police were operating out of it. The home of Sarad Chandra Shaha was attacked by arsonists; according to *Saptahik Nepali Awaj*, which described Shaha the second-in-command of the underground gang and mandles (pro-panchayat thugs). The mob managed to burn a motor-cycle, two cars, eight telephones, two television sets, 300 ties, 36 pairs of shoes, a bundle of U.S. dollars and a large amount of Nepali rupee notes in this house. The mob also attacked the statue of King Mahendra with more effect than on Democracy Day in February; this time he lost his sword and sceptre, his name was pried off the base, and the small animals around the base were smashed."¹⁹⁶

Dissolution of Panchayat System

Because of all these events a curfew was imposed in the Kathmandu valley. Even after this curfew, the protestors did not stop their activities. They carried out terrorist activities by erecting road barricades and causing traffic obstructions. Forced by an unprecedented popular uprising, the palace was constrained to lift the thirty years' old ban on the political parties on 8th April and later on to dissolve the very Panchayat System on 16th April. And thus the Panchayat System introduced by King Mahendra in 1962 met decay in 1990 bringing along with it the end of thirty years old direct rule of the palace.



¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 33

¹⁹⁶ Shaha, f.n. No. 98, pp. 208-209

Chapter 4

PALACE SECRETARIAT AND NEPALESE POLITICS

The Palace Secretariat (PS) is one of the prominent political machinery of Nepal. From the year 1951 to 1990, this office remained as the main spring of Nepalese politics. The three Kings--Tribhuvan, Mahendra and Birendra-- gave diverse shapes and dimensions to Nepalese politics through this machinery. During King Tribhuvan's time, the palace secretariat became an effective machinery under the supervision of the Indian government in carrying out its political activities in Nepal. The trend of the office took a great turning with King Mahendra's ascent to the throne of Nepal. At that time, the King utilised this machinery for bringing an end of democracy in the country. During King Birendra's period too, this trend did not change. It rather became an instrument for perpetuating palace activities.

PALACE SECRETARIAT OF KING TRIBHUVAN

Secretariat Headed by Indian ICS Officer

The dawn of democracy in 1951 brought about a remarkable change in the administrative machinery of Nepal's royal palace. Since that time, the administrative machinery of the palace remained no longer as the office to deal only with the King's household affairs. In reality, it became the main spring of administrative and political machinery of the entire nation. It was because of this reason that the entire power of the nation was transferred from the hereditary prime ministers to the King. In the words of Pradhan "the revolution of 1951 brought a change in the location of power. The king repossessed the powers which were used by Jung Bahadur in 1846."¹ At the time when King Tribhuvan returned from India after restoring his throne, he had brought with him an Indian ICS officer named as Govinda Narayan

1 Prachanda P. Pradhan, *Bureaucracy and Development in Nepal*, (Ph.D.Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Clermont Graduate School in 1969), p. 30.

Singh. To quote King Tribhuvan's own words "I have brought with me one Indian gentleman to work as my Private Secretary and two officers of the Indian Army to look after my security."² When King Tribhuvan ruled the country as the supreme authority of the nation, that person, Govinda Narayan Singh, became the central figure of the PS. It was he who decided each and every policy matter not merely of the palace but equally of the government. In the words of Tuladhar "Shree Govinda Narayan Singh ICS was posted at the Royal Palace as the Principal Secretary to His Majesty with the widest supervisory powers."³

The duties assigned to him were:-

- "1. To advise the Nepal Public Service Commission;
2. All correspondence regarding the following matters was to be addressed to him:-
 - a. All papers concerning the ministers, orders of the king and information regarding ministers etc. and questions relating to him.
 - b. Veto power of the king and related matters.
 - c. Government correspondence.
 - d. Non-Government servants wishing to see the king and other appointments.
 - e. Matters concerning the public.
 - f. Public works.
 - g. Appeals and public and semi-government correspondence.
 - h. Discipline of employees in the King's Secretariat and their appointments.
 - i. Association and Unions to be safeguarded.
 - j. Appointment letters issued by the king.
 - k. Medals and honours, prizes for contests."⁴

Retention of Old Employees

After assuming the whole and sole authority of the country, King Tribhuvan did not oust the old-time employees of the royal palace. He retained most of them in the office of the household affairs while the best among them were selected for the PS. In that way, he retained almost all of them in the palace service either in one way or the other. He did not have other options for selecting other staff because of his limited contact with the people and the government officials of Nepal in the past. As regards the retention of old employees, the words of Shaha are:-

2 Daman R. Tuladhar, *Contemporary Nepal (1945-1955)*, (Kathmandu: Laxmi Publications, 1980), p. 273.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 319.

4 Kusum Shrestha, *Monarchy in Nepal: Tribhuvan Era*, (Bombay: Popular Prakashan Private Ltd., 1984), p. 152.

"After the 1951 political change some of the old-time employees of the royal palace temporarily came under a cloud for their role at a crucial time during the absence of the principal members of the royal family in New Delhi in the course of their struggle to regain power from the Ranas. However, all of them were actually retained in the palace service. King Tribhuvan and his successors had limited options in the matter in so far as their contact with state officialdom during the entire period of more than a century of the Rana rule was strictly confined to a select few, seconded by the Rana rulers themselves on the basis of their absolute personal trust. All that the two of King Birendra's immediate predecessors could do under the circumstances was to make the best use of the contacts they had had from before. In retrospect both of them must be credited with success in utilising those contact to their advantage when the time came."⁵

Dignitaries of palace Secretariat

In the newly organised PS known as the Principal Secretariat, the King admitted most of the staff from among the old employees or on the basis of their recommendations. The only new important figures were Govinda Narayan Singh and Ishwari Man Shrestha. Govinda Narayan Singh was a person sent by the Indian Government to provide proper suggestions in the political affairs of Nepal. On the other hand, Ishwari Man Shrestha made his entry on the basis of open competition examination. The prominent figures of this secretariat were:-

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Govinda Narayan Singh | - Principal Secretary |
| 2. | Hansa Man Singh | - Seceretary |
| 3. | Dayaram Bhakta Mathema | - Joint Secretary |
| 4. | Ishwari Man Shrestha | - Assistant Secretary |

Secretary Hansa Man Singh was the son of the King's private tutor *Kaji* Tulsi Man Singh. Joint secretary Dayaram Bhakta Mathema, on the other hand, was the then *Kharidar* (non-gazatted 2nd class officer of the present time) who had extended help to King Tribhuvan in contacting the Nepali Congress leaders in India during the period of democratic struggle. Because of his outstanding contribution, the royal family was obliged to him and hence had granted to him and to *Kaji* Krishna Lal Chitrakar the grand town hall in the heart of the capital for running the Cinema Hall. As regards Mathema's contribution to Nepalese politics, Tuladhar has written:

- a. "Among the numerous functionaries in the Royal Palace King Tribhuvan found *Kharidar* Dayaram Bhakta Mathema to be one whom he could trust implicitly without the risk of betrayal. He was the son of his trusted servant Ganesh Bhakta Mathema. He had given a good

5 Rishikesh Shaha, *Essays in the Practice of Government in Nepal*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1982), p. 125.

account of his trustworthiness by providing His Majesty with every available political literature and arranging his meeting with many of the progressive minded people in the capital. He was old enough to fulfil the mission and young enough not to incite any suspicion of the Rana authorities...

- b. King Tribhuvan sent away Shri Mathema with a lot of blessings and a personal letter addressed to General Mahabir Shumsher...
- c. First, Shri Mathema called on General Mahabir Shumsher at his residence at Alipor to deliver the personal letter of His Majesty. ... The General gave Mathema the assurance that he would arrange a meeting between himself and the members of the Congress High Command....
- d. A few days later Shri Mathema met Shri Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala, General Subarna Shumsher, Shri Surya Prasad Upadhyaya and a few members of the disbanded Indian National Army like GB Yakthumba and Major Purna Singh at the office of General Mahabir Shumsher in the Lighthouse Cinema building. Shri Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala made a lengthy dissertation of the political situation in Nepal. He expressed the view that the Rana regime there could not be demolished unless an extensive armed insurrection were launched. Then he went on to make an exposition of his party's position. He expressed his deep concern over the rapidity of the growth of the trend of rank republicanism in the thinking of his party cadres. He said that unless His Majesty would commit himself definitely with the cause of the Nepali Congress, Monarchy in Nepal would be exposed to the danger of being swept away in the process of the struggle against the Rana regime. He then handed over to Mathema a multi-pages document supposed to be a covenant between King Tribhuvan and the Nepali Congress for the signature of His Majesty....
- e. At the next opportunity Shri Mathema conveyed to His Majesty his impression of the Nepali Congress as a political force of doubtful dependability."⁶

Indian Influence in Nepalese Politics

King Tribhuvan was very much indebted to India and specially to Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru because Nehru had extended full co-operation to him when he was in New Delhi being deposed from his throne. The very words of King Tribhuvan in his context are:-

"To tell you the truth,--the Indian Prime Minister had done me quite a good turn. When the British government brought much pressure on him to recognise the Boy King, he choose to walk out

of the British Commonwealth rather than toe the British line of action. For this act of friendship I shall remain beholden to him."⁷

King Tribhuvan "was an extrovert man, gay and happy go lucky."⁸ He was no doubt a democrat but not so much serious about the politics of Nepal. All these factors helped the Indian government and its agent Govinda Narayan Singh to exercise an additional influence in the politics of Nepal. The result was that the Indian ambassador in Nepal began attending the cabinet meeting and in deciding major policy matters. This made the junior officers of the Indian embassy to intrude on Nepalese administrative machinery. As a result, "important correspondence in the Foreign Office were dictated by the junior officers of the Indian Embassy, RN Shukul (Additional Secretary) and PN Ojha (Third Secretary)"⁹

Liberal Attitude of King Tribhuvan

King Tribhuvan was a man of liberal nature. He entrusted all his authority to the staff of his secretariat. The staff could carry on their duties in a free manner. The King did not encroach or interfere so much on the performance of their duties. That is why, the palace employees of that time felt easy while performing their tasks. The staff generally did not grudge. They were happy in this way.

PALACE SECRETARIAT OF KING MAHENDRA

Nature of Palace Secretariat

The PS changed its nature with Mahendra's ascent to the throne of Nepal in 1955. The new King did not like to maintain Indian influence in Nepalese politics and particularly in the activities of the PS. Principal Secretary Govinda Narayan Singh was already back at this time. Now there was no more apprehension of the Indian influence in the PS. King Mahendra, desirous of controlling the entire administration of the country, transformed the PS into a very dynamic mechanism. While doing so, he entertained diverse variety of interest groups in this mechanism. This mechanism, in this way, became a body composed of a hierarchy of civil and military officials recruited from among the old and new generations. In the words of Joshi and Rose

"The palace secretariat consisted of a complex hierarchy of civil and military officials, some inherited from King Tribhuvan's private staff and some newly recruited, and represented generally a diverse variety

7 *Ibid*, p. 273.

8 Bhola Chatterji, *Palace, People and Politics: Nepal in Perspective*, (New Delhi: Ankur Publishing House, 1980), p. 102.

9 f.n. No. 2, p. 319.

of interest groups. There were several important clusters within the palace staff, mostly centered around such factors as kinship relationships and had a common interest in protecting their privilege and crucial decision-making position against the encroachment of the government functioning at the Central Secretariat."¹⁰

Two Seperate Offices

During King Mahendra's period, there were two seperate offices in the royal palace, one of King Mahendra and the other of the two Queen Mothers, Kanti Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah and Ishwari Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah. The Queen Mothers did not like interference of King Mahendra in their personal affairs. So they maintained their office in their own style. The office of both the queen mothers was headed by a stubborn person named Man Bahadur Shrestha. This man designated *Kaji* was a person who always posed undue authority in the office of the queen mothers. Often, most of the junior staff under him felt annoyed and once submitted a petition to the Senior Queen Mother, Kanti Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah, requesting her to remove *Kaji* Shrestha from the office. As the senior queen mother felt the smell of intervention by his son King Mahendra, she dismissed all the petitioners. The prominent figures among them were Krishna Prasad Pradhan and Krishna Prasad Upadhyaya, the fathers respectively of the present Deputy Chief of the Royalhousehold Sarada Prasad Pradhan and Secretary Sudan Prasad Pokharel. They were admitted by King Mahendra on his own service after a few months as *Mir Subbas* and later on promoted to *Sardars*.¹¹ The office of the queen mothers functioned seperately until their deaths during the period of their grand son King Birendra.

Enlargement of Palace Secretariat

After assuming the office, King Mahendra wished to handle almost all the responsibilities of the country himself. So he made the PS a potential centre of decision-making. The PS was enlarged and then reorganised by fragmenting it into different branches. In the words of Ishwar Baral

"When king Mahendra assumed broad administrative responsibilities as the successor to King Tribhuvan in 1955, the palace secretariat was reorganised and enlarged. This enlargement of the palace secretariat made the palace secretariat one of the potential centers of decision-making in the administration of Nepal. There were six

10 Bhuwan Lal Joshi and Leo E. Rose, *Democratic Innovations in Nepal*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), p. 376.

11 The author had received information from *Kaji* Shrestha that: "The junior staff under me had once submitted a petition to the senior queen mother requesting her to oust me from the post. The queen mother handed me the same petition to read before her. I made a thorough reading of the petition. The queen mother asked me as regards my opinion on the petition. I prayed her to dismiss all the petitioners for doing mischief. The queen mother okayed and thus they were dismissed from their posts."

divisions in the Palace Secretariat. They were: Principal Secretariat headed by Principal Secretary, Sardar Hansa Man Singh; Principal Personal Secretariat headed by Principal Personal Secretary Bada Kaji Pushpa Raj Rajbhandari, Principal Private Secretariat headed by Mr. Lok Darshan, after whose dismissal in 1957 the post remained unoccupied for a long period of time; Military Secretariat headed by General Sher Bahadur Malla; Press Secretariat headed by Renu Lal Singh."¹²

Almost all the divisions of the PS were made to be headed by a principal secretary and a secretary. The position of these secretaries were elevated in comparison to the secretaries of HMG. The secretaries were entrusted with the authority of sending peremptory and preemptory command of the King to different offices and people. If the King had any message to convey to the government, i.e., prime minister or minister, that would be conveyed by the King himself or be sent on a written format undersigned by the Principal Secretary or Secretary of Principal Secretariat. The other peremptory and preemptory commands on public grievances were sent through the Principal Private Secretariat. The commands of the King were sent by this office to almost all the ministries of HMG and also to the Supreme Court. The Principal Secretary or Secretary conveyed their personal message to the prime minister or minister through the King only. The King permitted no one to encroach or interfere upon his own authority. If any Principal Secretary or Secretary or a senior officer tried to encroach upon the activities of the cabinet or ministry, he would be sacked immediately. The ousting of Lok Darshan Bajracharya and Purna Prasad Sharma may be taken as some of the examples in this direction.

Ouster of Lok Darshan Vajracharya

In the palace secretariat of King Mahendra, the most over-smart and dynamic figure was Lok Darshan Vajracharya. He was one of the trusted persons of King Mahendra, who also performed the task of private secretary to the King when he held the office of Crown Prince. Vajracharya turned to be a man of more drive and dynamism when he assumed the post of Principal Private Secretary after Mahendra's ascent to the throne of Nepal. The over-smart nature of Bajracharya and King Mahendra's special favour to him became the cause of envy and jealousy for the other prominent figures of the PS. They began to seek the right moment when they could assassinate his character and kick him out of the palace. They got the opportunity at a time when Bajracharya tried to encroach upon the cabinet of Prime Minister Dr. K.I. Singh by becoming over-smart as usual. Immediately after the dissolution of Dr. K. I. Singh's government, Vajracharya was sacked from his post. The old-time employees, who were fed up with him, also added strength

12 Iswar Baral, *Nepal: Trade and Information Directory*. (New Delhi: Nepal Trading Corporation, n.d.), p. 76.

in the expulsion of that dynamic person. Referring to over-smartness and extra jubiliancy of Bajracharya and other senior employees of the PS, Prime Minister K.I.Singh

"had told the king that corruption was rampant in the administration and in order to weed it out suggested to introduce reforms from the top. He sought to replace two of the four Principal Private Secretaries to the King and other high officials by 'honest man' whose number ran 117."¹³ The result was the dismissal of Lok Darshan Vajracharya, the King's Principal Private Secretary. The words of Shaha in this context are:-

"Among the two highly influential personal secretaries, Mir Subba Daya Ram Bhakta and Mir Subba Lok Darshan at the time of King Tribhuvan and King Mahendra respectively, will repay close attention in as much as their eventual ousters show how preponderant influence with the partimomial leader, is apt to excite jealousy among the entire range of servants both in the palace secretariat and the government secretariat, provoking them to act in concert to destroy or displace their outstanding rivals for royal favour and patronage."¹⁴

Prominent Figures of Palace Secretariat

During the year 1959 when King Mahendra awarded *The Constitution of the kingdom of Nepal 1959* to the people, the prominent figures of the PS were:-

Nepalese Royal Secretariat

Office of the Principal Secretary

Sardar Hansa Man Singh

Principal Secretary

Iswari Man Shrestha

Secretary

Office of the Principal Private Secretary

Vacant

Principal Private Secretary

Madhusudan Raj Rajbhandary

Secretary

Office of the Military Secretary

Bgd. General Sher Bahadur Malla

Military Secretary

Bgd. General Mohan Bikram Shah

Asst. Military Secretary

13 R.S.Chauhan, *The Political Development in Nepal 1950-70*, (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1971), p. 95.

14 Rishikesh Shaha, *Politics in Nepal 1980-1991: Referendum, Stalemate and Triumph of People Power*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 1992), p.40.

Office of the Principal Personal Secretary

Kaji Pushpa Raj Rajbhandari

Principal Personal Secretary

Sardar Surj Man Joshi

Personal Secretary

Office of Press Secretary

Renu Lal Singh

Press Secretary

Purna Prasad Sharma

Public Relations Officer

*Honourary A.D.C.s to the King*¹⁵

Maj. General Arun Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana

Maj. General Arjun Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana

Maj. General Samrajya Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana

Lt. General Nar Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana

General Hari Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana.

Appointment and Promotion System

During those days, say, in the fifties, the employees of PS were appointed on the basis of heredity or on the recommendation of some old-time employee rather than on merit or qualification. Only a few persons were found appointed to higher posts on the basis of qualification, that too, on the recommendation of some big boss. Some such persons appointed in higher posts were Press Secretary Renu Lal Singh, Secretary Durga Bahadur Shrestha, Deputy Secretary Kirti Ratna Bajracharya etc.. Without the recommendation of some senior employee, there was no possibility of being promoted only on the basis of merit or qualification. One of the unlucky fellows was Ram Bhakta Maharjan who, even being graduated in the early fifties, had to remain in the clerical job not being promoted to officer level for a long time. In those days, the graduated people would get officer posts in HMG immediately because of the shortage of graduates.

Curtailment of Employment Benefits

The employees of PS had never to appear in the open competition of Public Service Commission. There was no need of qualification for being promoted to higher posts. Only the blessings of the King in the form of peremptory command was of utmost need. In spite of all these facts, the staff of the palace were benefited with almost all the facilities of the civil servants of HMG. The curriculum vitae or bio-data of the palace employees was

¹⁵ The Honourary A.D.C. were mostly related to King Mahendra in one or the other way.

recorded in the seat roll of *Nijamati Kitabkhana* or Record Office of HMG. The employees were drawing salaries from HMG like all other civil servants. This trend of the PS changed in 1959 when the popularly elected government of the Nepali Congress under Prime Minister Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala came to power. The new prime minister was in no mood to retain such a system in the palace. He was of the opinion that the rules and regulation of HMG be pursued by the palace too if it were to retain, appoint and promote its staff. To say in other words, the existing staff of the PS be made to appear in the examination of Public Service Commission in order to prove themselves fit for their posts. In this way, the new prime minister tried to reform administration not merely of the country but equally of the palace. The words of Chauhan in this context are:-

"Since a corrupt and inefficient administration, which characterised the earlier regimes, had caused untold sufferings to the people, the government drew up a plan to reorganise the administrative set-up in such a way that it become not merely an instrument of making law and order efficiently but also be able to perform new tasks of development and democracy. As a measure, the government reorganised the administration from the Royal Palace to the Village Panchayat. Merit was recognized as the sole criterion for appointments and promotions. With this end in view, the country's Public Service Commission was reorganised to make it an effective institution of recruitment. Those who were already serving and to whom appointment had been given for extra-meritorious considerations were asked to appear before the Public Service Commission for screening and confirmation."¹⁶

Prime Minister Koirala did not feel that he would be able to succeed in the mission specially in regard to employees of the palace secretariat. So he scrapped the employees of the palace service from the civil servants of His Majesty's Government. Instead, he provided a special fund in the budget for running the PS on the King's own way.

With the installation of Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala as the elected prime minister in 1959, the role of the PS too was curtailed. The new prime minister was not in a mood to retain dyarchical system of administration in the country controlled also by the palace. So he did not permit the members of his cabinet to seek audience with the King without his previous consent. In this way, the new prime minister tried to break the existing tradition of the past with a view to establish his own authority upon the government. To quote Joshi and Rose

"B.P.Koirala reserved for himself the right to report to the king on governmental affairs, and other members of the cabinet could seek an audience with the king only with the permission of the Prime

Minister. This was a clear break with the past practices under which ministers, and sometimes even Departmental Secretaries, had often sought private audience with the king and had used these occasions to ventilate grievances against the Prime Minister or other colleagues with the inevitable consequence of endemic disharmony in the government. Presumbaly, the Prime Minister's ruling was resented in palace secretariat, since it further restricted its scope of action, but King Mahendra seems to have accepted it as in conformity with his new constitutional status."¹⁷

King Mahendra sensed a new kind of attitude in the newly elected Prime Minister. So "he ordered the Palace Secretariat staff to pay their respects to Prime Minister Koirala at his residence shortly after the appointment of the new cabinet. This formality was symptomatic of the new focus of political authority, and of the king's political perceptiveness."¹⁸ And it shows how the parliamentary system of democratic polity was very much opposed to the traditional Nepalese political culture.

Revival of Old Trend

After the royal coup of 15th December, 1960, King Mahendra began to assume the entire responsibility of the country as usual. In the name of laying the foundation of true democracy and also "cleaning the country's administration, radical changes were effected in the patterns and personnel of the top hierarchy of Nepal's general administration. The Public Service Commission was ignored and stood suspended."¹⁹ The prominent figures in the Central Secretariat of HMG were replaced by the new ones. The PS was made again the main spring of Nepal's political and administrative machinery. The King began to supervise various branches of administrative machinery personally. The Chief Secretary and Chief Commissioner were made to represent their departmental papers to the King each fortnight. In this way, the centralization of administration was perpetrated in the country as before. To quote Agrawal

"The secretariat system, found unsuitable, was replaced by a new set-up in February 1961. Five high powered officers took over all the Civil Departments from the existing ten secretaries and executed the supreme command coming from the palace. The new ministry of supervision and inspection was created in February 1961 to enable the king to personally supervise the various braches of administration."²⁰

17 Joshi and Rose, f.n. No. 10. pp. 376-367.

18 *Ibid.* p. 376.

19 Hem Narayan Agrawal, *Nepal: A Study in Constitutional Change*, (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., 1980), p. 51.

20 *Ibid.* p. 52.

This new trend brought a dramatic change in the administrative machinery of the government as well as the palace. The central secretariat of HMG was

"virtually reduced to the position of subordination of the Royal Palace. The new Council of Ministers was formed, headed by the king as the chairman, and the meetings of the Council were to be held in the Royal Palace. The Principal Secretary of the Royal Palace became the coordination between the Royal Palace and the Central Secretariat. The secretariat was virtually stripped of all powers. The secretariat at Singh Durbar had to send everything to the notice of the Principal Secretary of the king. Prior clearance from the Palace Secretariat became essential factor to the administration of the whole country."²¹

As regards the size and strength of the PS the words of M.R. Godall are:-

"The size of the palace secretariat has multiplied though personal statistics for the force are inexact. The Royal Palace directly employees more than 300 officers and subordinates. Its Principal Secretariat, which governs relations with Singh Durbar, employees almost 60 persons. Relations with the Army and the Police are supervised by the Principal Military Secretariat, numbering about fifty employees. A Principal Personal Secretariat, perhaps the advisory and task force closest to the king, employs some 90 persons. There are offices as well as for the king's Private Secretary, a Press Secretariat, a public relations group and comptroller."²²

Victimization of Dayaram Bhakta Mathema

Joint Secretary Dayaram Bhakta Mathema was a noble figure of the PS. He was endowed with almost all the facilities,—power, position, wealth, influence etc. etc.. He had been enjoying a glamorous life since the time when King Mahendra, the then crown prince "was a non-entity... neglected by his father."²³ The queen mothers had bestowed special favour to this gentleman even after King Tribhuvan's death. Blessed by King Tribhuvan's favour, he was in the possession of a cinema hall in the heart of Kathmandu city.²⁴ A man brought up in democratic outlook, Mathema was commanding respect among the elite circle of Nepal because of his linkage with the Nepali Congress leaders since the time of democratic struggle. One of his wives was a political worker who had been once an active participant of the democratic struggle in the country.

²¹ Pradhan, f.n. No. 1, pp. 40-41.

²² Cited in *Ibid*, p. 41.

²³ Chatterji, f.n. No. 8, p. 102.

²⁴ The Super Market Complex stands on the site of this cinema hall premises today.

King Mahendra had a biased outlook towards Dayaram Bhakta Mathema even before his enthronement as the King of Nepal. It was natural for him to become so because of his negative outlook for his father and also for democracy. As regards King Mahendra's negative outlook towards his father, the words of Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala are:-

- a. "On one occasion he (Mahendra) was organising some sort of a conspiracy against the king, that is, against his father, in which his father-in-law Hari Shumsher was playing a very important role. Hari Shumsher called on me once and asked me if I could be of help to the Crown Prince. He said that the people would like to take action against the government and they had contacted some army officers.... Ultimately, I made it clear that I was not interested in the plan and the Crown Prince also backed out. Later on the Crown Prince totally denied this."²⁵
- b. "My feeling is that he was very much repelled by his father and whatever the later did was anathema to him. It was a 'father-hate' reaction."²⁶

After his accession to the throne of Nepal, King Mahendra, therefore, tried to demoralise Mathema by elevating Ishwari Man Shrestha, a junior officer under him, to the senior position just above him. This attitude of King Mahendra helped other to incite the King against Mathema. Once a group of people got opportunity to incite the King after the royal coup of 1960. This group tried to victimize him by arranging arson on the cinema hall possessed by him in lease for about 100 years. And this task was done in the name of public grudge. Taking this issue as a clue, the King ousted Mathema from the palace service just a few days afterwards the arson. The lease agreement of the cinema hall also was cancelled.²⁷ Shaha has a separate version as regards this victimization and the version runs as:-

"The feeling of rivalry increased with the proximity of the competitors to the centre of power, and competition reached the highest level of intensity among those who are very close to the king. The struggle for power between... Sardar Hansa Man Singh and Meer Subba Daya Ram Bhakta Mathema, both officers of the royal palace secretariat, ending in the eventual ouster of the latter after the fire in the Janasewa Cinema Hall in 1961, are examples in this point."²⁸

Apprehending mischiefs and negligence of the governmental machinery on this arson the *Halkhabar Daily*, in the issue of 18th September, 1962 reports:-

²⁵ Chatterji, f.n. No. 8, p. 102.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 102.

²⁷ Mr. Mathema seemed to enjoy the Queen Mothers' favour even after such a victimization.

²⁸ Shaha, f.n. No. 5, p. 119.

"As a face saving device, the authorities and the subversive elements behind the screen may try to underrate the importance of this event. But it is not a frivolous event at this movement. The fire brigade is being stationed in front of this very cinema hall. Hence there is no ground to say that a heavy loss was sustained because of the unarrival of fire fighting trucks. It is a matter of dubious nature that the hall only at the distance of one hundred yards begins to conflagrate while the fire brigade remains watching the conflagration silently. The police sentry was displaced on the third day after stationing it for two nights as a safety measure. On the very night when the police sentry had been displaced, the hall was gutted with fire. If the police sentry had been displaced on the ground that there is no fear of any loss, the hall was gutted by fire immediately after the replacement of the police sentry. If they were aware of this event, why did they not undertake any safety measures. It is reported that one of the ministers had got the information of this arson and had informed it to one of his colleagues. In this way, it becomes clear that the government was aware of the forecoming arson. In spite of this information, why did the government remain silent while the hall is to be attacked by the arsonists,--it is still now a mystery to be solved. It is not understandable how the governmental authorities were convinced that the unrestrained move will perpetrate arson only on this house only. The event also did not trace why did the authorities remain silent without fulfilling their duty. It will be simply a pretext if they say that they did not have any mechanism to control the mob."²⁹

Changing Trend in Palace Service

The palace authority already being already consolidated after the coup of 1960, say, specially under the newly established Panchayat System, King Mahendra introduced new changes in the palace secretariat. In this connection, he dissolved the Public Relations Office, one of the prominent wings of the Press Secretariat. Public Relation Officer Purna Prasad Sharma was dismissed from the post because of his over smartness and encroaching nature. The two roaming (CID) officers under him, Dhanamani Acharya and Rebati Raman Khanal, were promoted to Assistant Secretaries for their contribution in providing top level secret informations on political activities.³⁰ Khanal also was granted more than two *ropanis* of land at the road adjoining the old Teku-Kalimati bridge in Kathmandu for residential purpose. This land costs more than a crore of rupees today. While making residence in this land, Khanal took the privilege of the palace and that caused the sealing of the gate of Mrs.

²⁹ Grishma Bahadur Devakota, *Nepalko Rajnitik Darpan Vol.III*, (Kathmandu: Upendra Bahadur Devakota, 1985), pp. 179-180.

³⁰ Both Acharya and Khanal are Principal Secretaries at royal palace the later one being retired only recently.

Sarala Joshi's residence. Mrs. Joshi had to purchase some more land for the access to her residence. Mrs. Joshi had submitted a petition to King Mahendra for redressing this injustice. An enquiry also was made in this context. The then Chief Zonal Commissioner Bishnu Mani Acharya took the side of Khanal and hence no action could be initiated.³¹ *Kaji* Pushpa Raj Rajbhandary was upgraded to No. 1 post of the palace service, say, Chief of the Royal Household. The other prominent figures being promoted were Sher Bahadur Malla, Ishwari Man Shrestha, Madhusudan Raj Rajbhandary and so on. They were promoted to head different secretariats of the palace. Besides that a special office named *Bishesh Jaheri Bibhag* (Special Petitions Department) was also created in the palace under former Chief Justice and Former Minister Anirudra Prasad Singh. The prime task of this office was to represent the public grievances to the King.

As regards the appointment of Anirudra Prasad Singh in the Special Petitions Department, the note circulated by the Principal Secretariat run as follows:-

"... a separate arrangement is being made in the Royal Palace for the Nepali citizens of any part of the kingdom to complain against the government employee, if the employee is found to perpetrate delay, conspiracy or disturbs by harassment or if he engages himself in the bribe or commission of any kind. His Majesty has appointed Mr. Anirudra Prasad Singh on this very department."³²

The Special Petitions Department did not succeed in its mission because it was entrusted with the task of looking into the petitions of civil and criminal cases, the cases which had been decided once by different courts of Nepal. This task was previously handled by a section of Principal Private Secretariat. Meer Subba Uma Nath Koirala, the head of this section, also was transferred to this office. Later on when the King felt that the time has come when the palace should have a legal expert of international calibre, he selected one such fellow from the HMG's office and brought him to the palace service by transferring him from the service of HMG/Nepal. That legal expert known by the name Nagendra Prasad Shrestha had done LL.M. from England after topping the list of B.L. candidates of first division in Nepal. The other person to be transferred to palace service from HMG service was Kalyan Bikram Adhikari. Adhikari did not have a good relation with Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa. However, liked by the King, he was transferred to the office of PS.

Extra Facilities to Palace Employees

King Mahendra was highly pleased with the senior staff of his office for the extraordinary service rendered by them in the consolidation of palace

31 The author then was an Assistant Secretary who as the head of the Petition Section had also entertained the petition of Mrs. Joshi at that time.

32 Devakotta, f.n. No. 29, p. 498.

authority. So he tried to please them by providing them some sort of reward or facilities. In this connection, he made grants of lands to almost all of them in the Tarai belt and in other areas too. Furthermore, he facilitated them with the provision of importing luxurious goods from abroad and from the duty free shops in Kathmandu for personal use. That facility was extended to almost all the officer-level employees of the palace service. With the passage of time, the King also felt that secrecy of the palace activities be maintained very strictly. He also knew that it was almost an impossible task in a joint family system which prevailed in those days. Hence the King made grants of land and cash to some of the prominent figures of the secretariat for erecting separate residence with modern facilities. Among these figures who got land and cash for erecting separate buildings were secretaries like Ishwari Man Shrestha, Madhusudan Raj Rajbhandari, Renu Lal Singh etc.

Royal Relatives in Palace Service

King Mahendra seems to pursue a very special policy of his own as regards his relatives in the palace service. He did not assign them important portfolios of the palace service although they were provided with special facilities and honourable positions. He was of the opinion that if the relatives were assigned to key posts they could not be removed from office immediately even at the time of their wrong deeds. It was because of that reason, Queen Ratna's brother-in law Major General Mohan Bikram Shah, her own brother Brigadier General and Joint Secretary Sushil Shumsher Rana and the son of her maternal uncle Col. Mohan Bikram Shah had to suffer from such setbacks. The well known scholar Shah has his own version in regard to these royal relatives and the version runs as:-

"After the accension of King Mahendra to the throne that year, General Malla, as a result of quick promotions, rapidly rose to the rank of principal military secretary, outclassing both Major General Mohan Bikram Shah who was the husband of Queen Ratna's eldest sister and also military aide-de-camp of King Mahendra ever since he was Crown Prince, and Brigadier General Samar Raj Kunwar who was also known to be an old-time favourite of King Mahendra."³³

It is to be noted that King Mahendra promoted his employees more on the basis of loyalty and recommendation of senior officers than by the virtue of relation although he would also give sometimes preference to heredity. In General Malla's case, it can be said that he could surpass his senior colleagues, specially General Shah because Shah had been retained in office even after his retiring age. As regards General Kunwar, he was not a senior officer in comparison to General Malla.

New Royal Palace Regulation

With the passage of time, the King found the employees of the younger generations grudging against the palace atmosphere. The reason behind this grudge was that the employees of the young generations were unable to get equal opportunity with the employees admitted on hereditary basis. As the King found them not in a mood to remain silent as their predecessors did, he tried to pacify them by introducing a new regulation '*Rajdarbar Sewa Nimayabali*' (Royal Palace Service Regulation) in the year 1970. This regulation made a clear-cut departure by making M.A. second division compulsory for being promoted to the post of principal secretary level. It also provided the right to Promotion Committee for carefully scrutinising conditions in the appointment and promotion of the employees in the palace service on the basis of quality and qualification. The organisation chart of the PS has been incorporated in the appendix. (See appendix)

Decision Making Process

As a King, Mahendra was a master strategist. He had the nature of taking responsibility of all the actions undertaken by the palace secretariat. The palace secretariat was the main body to carry on his wishes. The King had entrusted the secretaries and other officers of the palace secretariat with full responsibility to carry out duties in accordance with the rules and regulations. While doing so he reserved decision-making process on major issues by himself. On some major issues, he would have private consultations and long deliberations with the experts. He would give final decision only on the basis of such deliberations. On some other issues, the secretaries too could make a detailed study. On the basis of such a study, they could prepare a report and submit it to the king accompanied by alternative suggestions and plans. The report submitted in this way would be read by the King himself and sent back by writing a note as his decision. The King pursued such a process even on the ordinary petitions sent to him through other unofficial channels too. This trend made the secretaries more easy in handling their responsibilities. The decision sent by the King in this way would be prompt, solid and clear-cut. Certain instances in regard to such decisions taken on ordinary petitions may be cited as:-

- a. In the year 1971, Ganesh Man Shrestha, the then *Pradhan Pancha* of Kathmandu Town Panchayat, submitted a petition requesting the King to nominate him in the National Panchayat. The response sent in regard to it was that 'during your chairmanship, the Town Panchayat has not been successful in its duty of cleaning the Kathmandu town. Hence, it is really absurd what would a person, who had not been able to carry on his duty even in the Town Panchayat, do by going to the National Panchayat.' This was a message being conveyed to Shrestha by the PS.

- b. In the same year, Shyam Krishna Bhattarai, Secretary ousted from HMG service on the charge of rape case, sent a petition requesting the King to reinstate him in his old post. He had sent the petition through a very private channel, say, through Princess Princep Shah. The King sent the petition to the Principal Private Secretariat writing a note on the head of the petition. And the note ran as:- 'As you had been arrested red handed on rape case only recently, it is not possible to reinstate you to the old position all at once. It will create a wrong impression to the general mass if you are reinstated immediately.' This was a message conveyed to Bhattarai through Principal Private Secretariat.³⁴

King Mahendra was a man both of words and actions. He generally kept the promise which he had once given. He had the nature of taking prompt action on everything. In order to boost his own image, he allocated funds and provided facilities to others immediately. Similarly he initiated prompt actions to the wrong-doers too. By pursuing a policy like this, he had been able to win the heart of the Nepalese people. He pursued this policy not merely while he was in the palace but equally while he was on his trip to different parts of the country. Some words from Tiber Seklej's book *Window on Nepal* are traced here as examples:-

"During his audience the king often sat, surrounded by his Ministers and other authoritative persons, to hear the wishes of the country people. One village needed drinking water: the king turned to his Finance Minister: 'Could we give them three thousand rupees to bring water to the village?' The sum was given. The schools, too, needed new buildings and small irrigation projects or bridges were all helped by encouraging gifts of money....

Some officials who had gone off the road found a youngwoman weeping. When they asked what had happened, she explained that her parent, owing a large sum of money to the landlord, had forced her to marry him. 'It is your turn to act!' said the king to the Chief Justice when this was reported to him. The Chief Justice did act. He not only annulled the marriage and married the girl to her young sweetheart, but after examining other cases, set free five slaves owned by landowners, and severally lectured the authorities for tolerating slavery, which is forbidden by law in Nepal. Again many schools were given help, others were founded, and money was allocated for irrigation projects."³⁵

34 The present writer was then an Assistant Secretary of Principal Private Secretariat who looked into the Petition Section as its section head. At a certain meeting with this author, Shyam Krishna Bhattarai had told that 'you have been elevated to Assistant Private Secretary only recently. And it is puzzling that you have become so much influential in the decision-making process within so short a time.'

35 Marjorie Boulton (tr), *Window on Nepal*, (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1959), pp. 54-59.

The Newars in Palace Service

During King Mahendra's period, the Newars of Kathmandu valley are seen to hold key positions in the palace service. Except in the Principal Military Secretariat, almost all the prominent secretariats and departments were headed by the Newars. The No.1 office of the royal palace, Office of Chief of the Royalhousehold was headed by *Badakaji* Pushpa Raj Rajbhandary. The chiefs of the other offices of the palace known as Principal Secretariat, Principal Private Secretariat, Principal Personal Secretariat and Principal Press Secretariat were also the Newars named respectively as Hansa Man Singh, Ishwari Man Shrestha, Madhusudan Raj Rajbhandary and Renu Lal Singh. The Private Secretary to the Crown Prince was also a Newar named as Surendra Man Joshi. The other important dignitaries holding the posts of secretaries--Surya Man Joshi, Ratna Bahadur Joshi, Bhupal Singh Pradhan, Gehendra Man Singh, Durga Bahadur Shrestha--were also from this community.

Almost all these Newars got opportunity to remain in the key posts of the palace service not because that they had possessed extra calibre or talent in comparison to others. They never planned strategy for such a thing too. In those days, say, before the dawn of democracy in Nepal, it was the hereditary Rana Prime Ministers who selected and appointed the employees of the palace service. In the words of Shah, King Tribhuvan and his predecessors "had limited options in the matter in so far as their contact with state officialdom during the entire period of more than a century of the Rana rule was strictly confined to a select few, seconded by the Rana rulers themselves on the basis of their absolute personal trust."³⁶ During the days of Ranacracy, the Kings of Nepal--Tribhuvan and his predecessors-- did not have any say in the selection of their own staff. The Rana prime ministers supplied the employees of their own choice to the palace. While making such selection, they would ask the employees to remain loyal more to themselves than to the palace. They were generally dull and insignificant persons. In their opinion, the sending of active and talented persons in the palace would mean the shortening of the life-span of their own personal rule. The other significant groups of people-- the *brahmins* and *kshatriyas*--did not take interest in this selection because they were interested in the office of the Rana prime ministers for holding power, money and key positions. It was natural for them to do so because the centre of everything, like power, money, position etc., was the office of the prime ministers before the dawn of democracy.

After the Rana rule was overthrown in 1951, the entire power of the country was restored to the palace. At that time, fortune favoured the Newars of the royal palace. They found themselves entrusted with key positions because of their proximity, sincerity, loyalty and servitude towards the royalities. Everywhere in the palace, the Newars held the key posts. This

made King Mahendra to face grudge from other communities that he was encouraging only the Newars in the palace secretariat. This has been a feeling expressed by King Mahendra to his confidential persons. Despite such grudge from other communities, the King remained adamant in listening to them. He did not change his attitude because he had got opportunity to test almost all the Newars of the palace at the time of critical hours. Almost all of them had remained loyal to him even when he was not in a position to afford salary to them for a long time while he was assuming the position of crown prince. Because of such loyalty, the King elevated even his valets to the higher posts of *Sardar* and *Meer Subba*. The name of some such lucky fellows were Kiran Bahadur Shrestha, Kedar Man Shrestha, Ram Bahadur Rajbahak and Moti Ratna Sthapit.

Informal Agents of Change

As a master strategist, King Mahendra knew whom to confide and whom to corner. He had taken into confidence almost all the palace staff who were in proximity with him. The King had maintained personal contact even with the ordinary employees of the palace service. By this contact, he had been able to collect reliable informations, i.e., intelligence service from all quarters. Because of their proximity with the King the personal attendants and junior employees too had become the informal agents of political and other changes in Nepal. And it did not matter to which position the employees belonged to. As regards these informal agents of intelligence service, the remark of Shaha are:-

"As elite politics operates almost exclusively on a personal level, the overriding importance of proximity to the king combined with the informal character of Nepali government and politics has made the personal attendants of the king formidable members of the political elite irrespective of their formal rank or position. In answer to the author's question about the sources of his 'reliable information', King Mahendra once told him that in addition to the intelligence service, he had his valet, gardener, chauffeur and other household servants, plus a large number of his retainers who volunteered information to him."³⁷

It is said that at a certain time, the King received information from one of his attendants that the then *Naib Bada Guraju*, perhaps Bidhi Raj Pandey, was having amorous relation with a Lama lady (daughter of *Chiniya Lama*) of Baudha monastery at Kathmandu.³⁸ He also related how the *Naib Bada Guraju* may be found loitering in a drunken mood every night at the Chabahil road. The King had met the *Naib Bada Guraju* time and again while he was returning from his resort as Gokarna sanctuary late at night. Hence he

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

³⁸ This lady is known to be a concubine of *Naib Bada Guraju* Pandey.

suspected the moral character of *Naib Bada Guraju* in regard to his relation with the Lama lady of Baudha. The result was that he abolished the hereditary tradition of the royal preceptors by enacting a new law. Shaha has furnished a small hint in regard to the abolition of hereditary preceptors with the words "... the late King Mahendra abolished the hereditary basis of the office of the Royal Preceptor (Rajguru) by formally laying down that the position in future would be open to anyone of the Brahmin caste on the basis of merit and competition, ..."39

The other important information which the King received through this channel was as regards the misunderstanding generated between the royal guards of the palace and the other battalions stationed outside. The event leading to this misunderstanding runs as:-

In the year of sixties, the King was on one of his visits to foreign country. Crown Prince Birendra was being nominated the Chairman of the Regency Council. At this time, a football match was being organised (played) in the National Stadium between two battalions--Kali Bahadur Battalions (of the palace) and Raj Dal Battalion. On the game, one of the football player of Kali Bahadur battalion was found to make faults many times in order to win the game. The audience began to murmur against such faults. One of the members of the audience was Brigadier General Rabi Shamsher Rana. Rana got irritated by this event. He entered into the football ground and intervened the game by beating the defaulter. The game stopped in this way. The members of the Kali Bahadur battalion referred the matter of this intervention to the Chairman of Regency Council. The chairman got angry and he immediately ordered Brigadier General Rana to be dismissed from his post. The Chief of the Army staff was in no mood to dismiss Brigadier General Rana. He knew that such a dismissal would encourage the ordinary soldiers to go against the commander and the recurrence of such event might disrupt even the military command. But the army chief had no other option than to carry out the royal command. Brigadier General Rana was dismissed from his post.

When King Mahendra returned Nepal, he was shocked to learn of this news. He got confirmation of this news even from the Army Chief. He felt that the Royal Guard Brigade, which consisted mainly of Kali Bahadur and Gorakh Bahadur battalions, was going beyond its limit because of its posting in the palace. So he sought to remedy this situation by arranging exchange of all battalions of the country as Royal Guards. Shaha has his own version regarding this new arrangement and the version runs as:-

"However, the existence until of a separate corp of Royal Guards consisting of the Kali Bahadur and Gorakh Bahadur battalions

stationed inside the palace grounds, separate from the general body of the army, while serving the purpose of checks and balances from the viewpoint of the monarch, had also created a state of mutual jealousy and friction, which could eventually undermine the concept of loyalty to the crown. In 1971, the late King Mahendra sought to remedy the situation by arranging for all battalions of the regular army to act as Royal Guards by rotation."⁴⁰

Similarly, the other important information to be noted was in regard to the succession of Nepal's throne in future. A few days afterwards the introduction of new *Muluki Ain* (Civil Code or Laws of the Realm) on 17th August, 1963, King Mahendra got information from one of these informants that Prince Rabindra Bikram Shah was on the lookout of claiming the position of crown prince of Nepal. On the basis of information received from Secretary of Law Ministry, Binod Prasad Dhital, Prince Shah, being the first son of King Mahendra although from a concubine, was in a position to claim this authority because of the new Civil Code (*Muluki Ain*). The King received this news as a shock because he did not have any intention to confer the position of crown prince on Prince Shah.

At that time, he found one of the sectarian organisations, Dharma Rakhsya Mandal, raising voice against this code on the ground that it has helped to break the tradition and culture of the country. Taking this voice as clue, the King made a notice to be circulated from the Special Petitions (Complaints) Department (Bishesh Jaheri Bibhag) of the palace secretariat that

"the new legal code had not abolished the caste system. The notification specified that the code permits everybody to follow his religion according to tradition. It seeks only to introduce an element of equality before law. The notification further makes clear that those who indulge in action prejudicial to the social customs and traditions of others will be punished."⁴¹

In the meantime Secretary Dhital also was relieved from his post. It is said Prince Rabindra Bikram Shah found himself upset by this new change. He felt himself as a fallen flower and later on published a collection of lyrics named as *Jhareko Phool*, to say in other words, the fallen flower. The unofficial translation of a few lines from his first poem runs as follows:-

"I have been a fallen flower,
 who will there be to cherish it?
 I have been an extinguished lamp,
 how will there be an effulgence ?

.....
 I have been a dead corpse

40 *Ibid*, p. 124.

41 Pradhan, f.n. No. 01, p. 54.

who will there be to care it?

I have been a thrown out body

who will recollect such a one?"⁴²

After writing this book, Prince Shah asked his father to give a message to be incorporated in his lyric book. The intention of Rabindra Shah, while asking the message, was to present himself before his father as an orphan deprived even of his due rights. In his message to the book, King Mahendra implicitly countered the intention of his son with the words:- "By dint of adequate labour and successful endeavour of toilsome Nepalese youths, the Nepalese literature will rather bloom and blossom slowly and not fall,-- this is my conviction and my best wishes too."⁴³

King Mahendra's Attitude towards Palace Secretariat

During King Mahendra's time, the PS worked as the subordinate body of the King. This body was under the King's full command and control. No secretary or employee of the palace ventured to challenge or contradict the command and authority of the King directly or indirectly. The King listened the views of his staff very carefully. He appreciated the views if they were of some significance. But the final decision would always be made by the King himself. While coming to final decision on major subjects, the King would listen the views of the experts too. He would ask the experts to submit the plans, programmes and calendar of operation too. He would give final decision on such matters only after having long deliberations and scrutiny. The King always kept his words or promise. He fully confided his staff while carrying on the duties. He would protect them by all means while carrying on royal commands. The decision given by the King remained always clear and to the point. King Mahendra's attitude like this helped the palace employees to carry on their duties very efficiently and effectively. He did not mind or engage himself on petty matters. There had been check and balance between the employees of the palace. He permitted no one to perpetrate groupism. The staff nearer to him were provided with each and every facility like money, residence, position etc.. It was because of these facts the King could make control of the entire country in political and administrative matters through this secretariat.

PALACE SECRETARIAT OF KING BIRENDRA

New Figures in Palace Secretariat

Unlike his own immediate predecessors, King Tribhuvan and King Mahendra, King Birendra had never to suffer set-backs in his early life. Unlike

42 Rabindra Shah, *Jhareko Phool*, (Kathmandu: Rabindra Shah, 2022 V.E.), p.1.

43 *Ibid*, p. n.n.

all of his predecessors, he had been the only King benefited with formal education in the famous colleges and universities of the west like Eton and Harvard etc.. It was because of such a background, King Birendra was over-confident of his capacity and competency. He did not have the idea of hard realities of life. So he did not try to learn the realities of Nepalese politics from the old staff of the palace like his father.

Being over-confident of his own capacity and competency, he tried to run the PS in his own way immediately after his succession to the throne of Nepal. He did this by offering sinecure jobs to almost all the senior staff of the old palace secretariat. As a result, Principal Secretary Hansa Man Singh was promoted to Master of Ceremonies and thus entrusted with ceremonial job only. The post of Principal Secretary was replaced by Principal Private Secretary Ishwari Man Shrestha. Principal Personal Secretary Madhusudan Raj Rajbhandary and Principal Press Secretary Renu Lal Singh were transferred to head the newly established departments known as Personal Department and Department of Commemoration respectively assigning them the position of Deputy Chief of the Royalhousehold. In the offices of Principal Personal Secretariat, Principal Private Secretariat and Principal Press Secretariat, the immature figures named Surendra Man Joshi, Narayan Prasad Shrestha and Chiran S. Thapa respectively were made the chiefs. As regards this new change, the office of the Chief of the Royal Household notifies that

"His Majesty the King has transferred and promoted the following officers belonging to different offices and secretariats of the royal palace with effective from 20th February, 1972.

1. Principal Secretary Sardar Hansa Man Singh to Master of Ceremonies.
2. Principal Private Secretary Meer Subba Ishwari Man Shrestha to Principal Secretary.
3. Principal Personal Secretary Meer Subba Madhusudan Raj Rajbhandary to Deputy Chief of the Royal Household.
4. Principal Press Secretary Meer Subba Renu Lal Singh to Deputy Chief of the Royal Household.
5. The Crown Prince's Private Secretary Surendra Man Joshi to Principal Personal Secretary.
6. Brigadier General Dan Gambhir Singh Rayamajhi to Principal Military Secretary.
7. Private Secretary Gehendra Man Singh to Personal Secretary.
8. The Crown Prince's Joint Private Secretary Narayan Prasad Shrestha to Private Secretary.
9. The Crown Prince's Deputy Secretary Chiran Shamsher Thapa to Joint Press Secretary."⁴⁴

Job Distribution to Secretariats

The trend of the palace secretariat changed under the new King in this way. Unlike his father Mahendra, the King gave prominence more to friendship and relation than to loyalty and sincerity. On the name of merit, the secretariats were filled up mostly with new figures, specially with his own teacher and friend or the men recommended by them. Each of the secretariat was entrusted with the task of supervising certain ministries or departments of HMG. The secretaries were authorised to supervise on every ministry or constitutional body of the country. The task entrusted to these new secretariats were:-

1. Principal Secretariat:- This secretariat was entrusted with the task of supervising the Cabinet as well as the constitutional bodies.

2. Principal Military Secretariat:- The military and police staff of the entire country were kept under the supervision of this secretariat. The other important task of this office was to look into the security matters of the royalties.

3. Principal Personal Secretariat:- This secretariat was given the task of looking into ministries like, Health, Industry, General Administration etc. It was also the office which dealt with personal affairs of the royalties.

4. Principal Private Secretariat:- The most important ministries like Foreign, Home, Education were kept under the supervision of this secretariat. The other prominent offices of the palace as well as of the government known respectively as Janch Bujh Kendra (Investigation and Enquiry Centre later on known as Department of Research) of the Palace and Zonal Commissioners of HMG were affiliated to his secretariat.

5. Principal Press Secretariat:- This was also a prominent secretariat which dealt with important ministries like Finance, Commerce, Works, Transport, Tourism, Communication etc. The other task handled by it was circulating information of the palace secretariat (PS).

The introduction of new figures in the palace secretariat, in the beginning, kindled a new ray of hope among the people. The people were of the opinion that the new change would bring liberalization in the political atmosphere of the country. Nath writes:-

"...Almost at the same time, when he assigned sinecure job to his father's aides, whose main role used to be backstage machinations and politicking, there were renewed speculation that he might remove the barriers between the Palace and the people... To project an untarnished image of the new monarch, the people were led on yarns crediting him with a modern and liberal outlook."⁴⁵

Under this new system, the secretaries of the palace were entrusted with more authority than in the past. They were empowered to supervise and to make enquiry even to the ministers unlike in the past. The ministers and secretaries of HMG were made also to represent and respond to them even on trifling matters. The result was that the new secretaries began to intervene in the activities of different ministries indirectly. The relation and friendship of the new secretaries with the king or queen also helped them to intervene in the activities of governmental machinery. The government turned virtually as agents to carry out the commands or words of the secretaries than of the king and the people.

Adoption of Controlling Measures

After reconstituting the PS in this way, the King tried to control palace employees by adopting various measures. As a first step, he made the old secretariat buildings to be demolished. On the very area where the old secretariat buildings stood, a new large secretariat building was erected on the design of a school building. The new secretariat building was made on such a way that the employees of the secretariat could see nothing outside and the outsiders too cannot have a look inside the office through the windows. The windows had been fixed on the portals with such glasses that only lights could pass inside through the windows. And for ventilation purpose, only the upper part of the windows could be opened. Thus it was a secretariat building where the palace employees suffered from some sort of isolation and dryness.

Unlike in the past, the secretaries and other officers were not permitted to meet the outsiders or visitors in the waiting room of their own. Some separate common rooms were provided for meeting purpose. For the admission of the outsiders, the gate pass was made compulsory. While adopting these measures, the King had in his mind that the palace employees might not loiter hither and thither and talk to each other within the palace premises. Unlike his father, he neither wished that certain employees might come to have his *darshan* and ask something while he was on his way to the office. But the other side of the coin was that the King lost contact with the lower staff of the palace and thus missed the opportunity to utilise them as informal agents of information and change unlike in the past.

The second measure adopted by him in the process of control was the creation of a new office known as Postal Unit (*Chithipatra Sakha*). This was an office which performed the task of liaison between the outsiders and palace secretariat in receiving and delivering letters, documents etc.. By creating the section, the outsiders were prohibited to enter the palace gate in order to deliver letters, messages etc. as usual.⁴⁶ Similarly, the peons of different offices of the palace secretariat were transferred to the office of Postal Section and the palace secretariat was made to deliver its messages or letters outside

46 Previously the postmen and peons of different ministries and departments used to come directly to the palace secretariat and delivered letters, parcels, messages etc.

the palace through that channel. In that way, the traffic of the employees or other people were reduced and controlled within the palace courtyard.

As another measure of control, the King curtailed almost all the extra facilities enjoyed by the palace employees. Unlike his father, he made no grants of public land to the palace employees. Furthermore, he curtailed the facilities of importing luxurious goods from abroad and from Duty Free Shops in Kathmandu for personal use. But before initiating this measure, he made to investigate on the misuse of such items.

The measures undertaken by King Birendra were of course good. But he did not understand that the employees, who once happened to exploit such privileges, were not in a position to abandon them. In order to compensate the facilities, they, the top ranking officers specially, began to spread their hands in bribery, corruption, commission and thus began to loot the country in the name of the King. The King was not able to check such activities perpetrated by the top ranking officers of the PS (Palace Secretariat).

King Birendra adopted the policy of controlling the employees of the PS even after the re-establishment of democracy in 1990. The measure adopted at this period was the introduction of time recording machine in the palace gates. Not a single employee was permitted to enter and go outside the palace gate without official business or without recording time. In this system, even the senior officers of the PS were included. This system prevails in the royal palace even today.

Mobilization of Department of Research

The Department of Research (Janch Bujh Kendra) previously known as Investigation and Enquiry Centre was one of the prominent departments of the palace secretariat since King Mahendra's time. This office was set up under the surveillance of the then Crown prince (present king) when he had completed the age of 18 years. It was assigned the task of looking into public grievances and observing the policies, laws and acts aimed at the welfare of the people. In the words of King Mahendra

"....I have, from time to time, pointed out the need for efficient administration, respect for laws, impartial conduct and for the prompt solution of problems in a planned and disciplined manner. Bearing in mind all these points and still finding on occasions discrepancies between our policies and their implementation as well as the inadequacy of making of laws or formulation of policies for uplifting Nepalese Society, I have thought of setting up a Janch Bujh Kendra (Investigation centre) under the surveillance of my son Crown Prince Birendra with a view to making a special effort for injecting efficiency into the country's administration so as to make it equal to the task of implementation and observance of the policies, laws and acts aimed at the welfare of the people as well as for the

redressal of people's grievances resulting from administrative shortcomings."⁴⁷

After King Birendra's accession to the throne of Nepal, the department was elevated as the most significant office of the PS. Experts from different departments of national life were employed for working in the office. These experts were made to furnish information and suggestions on different aspects of the country's administration which the King wanted. While doing so, the experts were authorised to investigate on any matter or on any persons including the cabinet ministers. The expert employed for that purpose could be an ordinary employee of the government; but when he was employed to work in this office, he found himself elevated to the position of an important figure, the figure who could command and investigate even to his own bosses. In that way, the department was made to interfere on any of the administrative units of the government. To quote Shaha

"For several years after his ascension to the throne in 1972 the king had the Centre for Enquiry and Investigation (Janch Bujh Kendra) as his top inspectorate agency functioning like the high-powered Imperial Inspectorate Organisation for the Shah of Iran. The Centre was authorised to investigate anything and anyone including cabinet ministers. It not only investigated charges of corruption in the government but also dealt with many personal pleas for royal justice sent to the king by mail."⁴⁸

In the initial phase, King Birendra tried to utilize the office for the development purpose. For that purpose, the King entrusted this department with the task of preparing reports of different districts of Nepal.⁴⁹ Experts from different departments of the national life were employed to work in this office. The experts of the office were made to survey development prospects of the entire country from diverse approaches. During his inspection visit to four development regions of the country--Eastern, Western, Far-western and Central (later on turned into five including Mid-western)-- the King took them as the prominent figures of his entourage. The experts were made to brief on development projects, on project chiefs and on shortcomings of the projects etc. On the basis of the reports and briefs furnished by them, the King awarded both reward and punishment. As regards the policy of rewards and punishments pursued by the King, the version of HMG runs as:- "By rewarding sincere workers and punishing the people found guilty of dereliction of duty, His Majesty has been instrumental in the moral upliftment of the people engaged in development activities."⁵⁰ After being terminated, some of

47 *The Rising Nepal*, (Kathmandu), December 17, 1970.

48 Rishikesh Shaha, *Three Decades and Two Kings (1960-1990) Eclipse of Nepal's Partyless Monarchic Rule*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1990), p. 10.

49 *Crown, Country and Coronation*, (Kathmandu: Department of Information, 1976), p. 23.

50 The present writer had then to request the then Prime Minister, Surya Bahadur Thapa, for a private telephone when he was elevated to the post of Joint Press Secretary.

these experts were elevated to prominent positions of the country like ministers, ambassadors, zonal commissioners, vice chancellors, secretaries etc.. In that way, almost all the prominent positions of the country were filled up with the experts who once had worked in the Department of Research.

Attitude of New Secretaries

The new secretaries, under King Birendra's rule, enjoyed enormous power because of their proximity with the King even before his ascent to the throne of Nepal. After assuming key positions during King Birendra's period, these secretaries began to express superiority over the old staff of the PS. In order to belittle the old staff, they began to voice against them even upon trifling matters. The King remained adamant in listening to the voice of the old group. This made Principal Secretaries like Ishwari Man Shrestha and Kalyan Bikram Adhikari to feel disgusted. Hence they requested the King to send them outside granting them some prominent positions. Accordingly, Shrestha was offered the post of Royal Nepalese Ambassador to Germany for a short time and Adhikari to the post of Alternate Director to Asian Development Bank.

The prominent among the new secretaries were Narayan Prasad Shrestha and Chiran S. Thapa. Among them too, Chiran S. Thapa had enjoyed the grace both of the King and Queen, of the King because of his friendship and of the Queen because of his matrimonial alliance with a Rana family. Thapa tried to show his superiority over the old staff by being sometimes adamant in carrying out the royal command sent through the channels of the old staff. The King had made a command that the officers up to the level of Deputy Secretary be provided with government telephone facility. The royal command was sent to Chiran S. Thapa, say, to Principal Press Secretariat. The command remained pending without being carried out. Even the Private Secretary of the King, Mohan Bikram Shah, who happened to be the son of Queen Mother Ratna's maternal uncle, did not get the facility of government telephone.⁵¹

This attitude of Chiran S. Thapa became an example to be pursued even by the later prominent figures like Ranjan Raj Khanal and others. The King was not in a position to control the undue activities of these secretaries. It was because of the reason the new secretaries began to falter. They began to fill up the governmental and other machinery with their own sycophants and began to think of their own power and benefits only. As regards Principal Secretary Ranjan Raj Khanal's encroachment to the royal command, the words spoken by Padma Nabha Adiga, the then Chief Priest of Pashupatinath temple, are:-

51 Purusottam Samsher JBR, "Samundrapar Bideshielka Bhai-Bhandhuharulai Chithi", *Suruchi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), October 30, 1994.

'About three years ago or say before the formation of Pashupati Development Trust, King Birendra asked me if I could head the then Pashupati Area Reforms and Development Committee for carrying out development works of the Pashupati area in a grand manner. I requested the King that 'let there be no impression on Your Majesty that I am hindering the development works of Pashupati area. At this time, I would be pleased to shoulder the responsibility entrusted to me. I have got plans to raise development funds of more than twenty crore Indian rupees from abroad. The plan is sure to be accomplished within two years. I will deposit the fund raised thus in the fixed account of a bank. And the interest of this amount will be utilised for development works without spending the principal amount. But I would like to stress to Your Majesty on one clause and the clause is that I should have Joint Secretary Sanu Bhai Dangol as the Vice President of this committee.' The King okayed the proposal and ordered Principal Secretary Ranjan Raj Khanal to make arrangement for reconstituting the then Pashupati Area Reforms and Development Committee as per my request. But when I met Khanal later on, he asked me to drop the name of Joint Secretary Dangol from the list of Committee. In lieu of Dangol, he suggested the names of Narakant Adhikari, Damodar Shamsher Rana, Rebati Raman Khanal, Dhanamani Acharya or some other distinguished person to be incorporated in the list as my second man. I replied that Lord's Pashupatinath has inspired me to suggest Dangol's name as the second man of the committee. So I cannot change the plan. I would rather prefer not to head the committee if I do not get Dangol as my second man.' Khanal remained adamant in listening to my words. Hence I sent three letters to Principal Secretary Khanal requesting him to drop my name from the committee if I did not get Dangol as my second man. Khanal remained adamant even in carrying out the orders of His Majesty. About three years latter, the King was constrained to form Pashupati Development Trust under the chairmanship of Queen Aishwarya Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah.'

On the third letter written to the Principal Secretary, Chief Priest Adiga expresses that "In order that the evaluation and supervision tasks of the central committee be well undertaken, I had specifically recommended in my two previous letters that the palace representative Sanu Bhai Dangol be nominated as the Vice President. At this time too, I make repetition of the same proposal." (See appendix) The attitude of the new secretaries made a wrong impact upon the entire administration of Nepal. As a result, nepotism, favouritism and corruption became rampant. The King had lost control even upon his own secretaries. Therefore the situation in Nepal became disturbing. Tracing a dim picture of this situation in Nepal, JBR in a letter writes:-

"Whatever might be the cause, anarchy began to spread all over the country. Monopoly was perpetrated everywhere. Mother Nepal was

suppressed much more and the people's desire was thwarted. Materials like idols, hashish, cocaine, opium, heroin, tiger skin were smuggled abroad. The vegetable ghee and gold were imported respectively from India and overseas. In the name of conserving wild life, rhinos were sent abroad as gifts and lakhs of dollars were taken as its due price. The personnel involved in this case were made to escape abroad because of the fear of exposure. Thus poor Nepal was made to suffer from AIDS."⁵²

Revival of Employment Benefits

Even during King Birendra's period, there were some secretaries who looked after the common welfare of the palace employees. Among such secretaries, Kalyan Bikram Adhikari stands at the apex. Kalyan Bikram Adhikari, when he was upgraded to the post of Principal Secretary, requested the King to revive the tradition of employment benefits for the palace employees as before, i.e., before B.P.Koirala's assumption to the position of elected prime minister of Nepal. As a result, the Royal Palace Service Act of 2016 was amended and an attempt also was made towards unifying palace service with His Majesty's Government's service. This act, which was brought into force with the advice and consent of the National Panchayat, provided almost all the facilities of the civil servants also to the palace employees.

As regards the benefits facilitated by this act, the Royal Palace Service Act of 2029 clearly specifies that "His Majesty's Government will make arrangement of the pension, gratuity and provident fund of the employees of royal palace service at par with that civil servants of His Majesty's government."⁵³

The palace employees feel themselves beholden to Adhikari for his contribution in getting the act. Because of the act, the ordinary employees of palace service, who did not have their own houses, also purchased land and built houses by lending money from the Civil Servants' Provident Fund. Some of the employees were given opportunities to have residential plots at Kuleshwar Residential Area in Kathmandu because of the facility.

The other person who raised voice demanding conveyance facility for the senior officers of the palace service at par with the civil servants of HMG was Joint Private Secretary Purushottam Prasad Subedi. That is why, Subedi was transferred back to HMG's service for making such a demand. Another cause for his transference was Subedi's personality clash with his immediate boss Narayan Prasad Shrestha. In spite of his transference, the senior officers of palace service up to first class were benefited with conveyance facility in

⁵² *Rajprasad Sewa Niyamawali-2043*, (Kathmandu: His Majesty's Principal Press Secretariat, 2043 V.E.), p. 220.

⁵³ Late Ambika Prasad Adikari, who became Badaguruju after Juna Nath Pandit's death, had once related to this author how he felt disturbed because of this event.

cash. The cash benefitted in this way amounted to the figure which equalled the price of ninety litres of petrol and ten litres of mobile approximately.

Breaking of Palace Service Regulation

During King Birendra's time, there had been many occasions when the Royal Palace Service Regulation was made to be broken. Some instances may be given as follows:-

- a. The Palace Service Regulation did not provide opportunity to the palace employees to contest open examination in order to get promotion. If the employees wished to contest, they had to leave palace service beforehand. This provision made the then *Naib Bada Guraju* Juna Nath Pandit not to contest the open examination being held for the vacant post of *Bada Guraju*. The result was that Ambika Prasad Adhikari was selected by the examination board for the position of *Badaguruju*. As *Naib Bada Guraju* Pandit complained to the King that he was being demoralised because of the fact, the King promoted Pandit to the post of *Badaguruju*.⁵⁴
- b. There had been no provision for the unqualified employees to be promoted above without completing ten years' service on the existing position. But that provision was made to be broken by promoting Joint Secretary Chandra Bahadur Shrestha to the position of Secretary prior to the completion to ten years. Shrestha was well-known in the palace for the qualities of sycophancy and servitude.

There had been other occasions, too, when the very regulation was made to be amended for granting special favour to some special persons. Among such persons, Chiran S. Thapa, Ranjan Raj Khanal and Gehendra Man Singh were the prominent ones. Chiran S. Thapa was authorised to authenticate preematory command by amending the regulation when he was holding the position just of Joint Secretary. His Majesty's Orders Authentication (Amendment) Regulation, 1972 clearly mentions that

"Subject to Sub Clause(2), the orders of His Majesty shall be authenticated by the Chief of the Royal household or Deputy Chief of the Royal household; the Master of Ceremonies or Deputy Master of Ceremonies; the Principal Military Secretary or Military Secretary; the Principal Secretary or Secretary; the Principal Private Secretary or Private Secretary; the Principal Personal Secretary or Personal Secretary; the Principal Press Secretary, Press Secretary or Joint Press Secretary."⁵⁵

There had never been an officer of Joint Secretary level who was granted such an authority previously. When Ranjan Raj Khanal and Gehendra

⁵⁴ *Nepal Rajpatra*, Vol. 21, No.56 Kha(Extraordinary), (Kathmandu), March 8, 1972.

⁵⁵ H.M. King Birendra, *Proclamations, Speeches and Massages 1972-81*, (Kathmandu: Department of Information, 1982), p.6.

Man Singh were promoted to the position of principal secretaries, the provision which demanded M.A. Second Class as the basic qualification for being promoted to the level of Principal Secretary had already been amended.

There had been many other occasions when the King made special favours to prominent personalities like Ishwari Man Shrestha, Madhusudan Raj Bhandary, Sarada Prasad Pradhan and others. And the favour extended to them was to retain them in office even after the retiring age, say, of 60 years.

Vision without Mission

King Birendra, sometimes, did not have the patience for listening others' views in detail. He did not like to go into the details of cases before coming to decision. Sometimes he made hasty decision on various matters without thinking of their consequences. Most of the words uttered or decisions undertaken by him took the shape of slogans without being fulfilled. Some of the prominent decisions which remained unfulfilled are:-

a. Shouldering Responsibility of Sick and Hungry Countrymen

"Just as I have affection for my country and people, so also I bear responsibility to alleviate the suffering of my sick and hungry countrymen."⁵⁶

b. Creating Nepal a zone of peace

"And today, peace is an overriding concern with us, it is only because our people genuinely desire peace in our country, in our region and everywhere in the world. It is with this earnest desire to institutionalise peace that I stand to make this proposition that my country, Nepal, be declared a zone of peace."⁵⁷

c. Raising Standard of Nepalese People to Asian Standard

"Let us pledge that in the remaining years of this century, we will shake off poverty imposed on us by our least developed economy and achieve a standard of living which is adequate to lead a life with human dignity from Asian standard."⁵⁸

d. Providing Basic Needs to all Nepalese

"It is true that the objectives of providing for all Nepalese, the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, health, education and security is a difficult goal to achieve but no matter how awesome the task let us ensure a firm political commitment through a systematic planning, programmes and their follow up."⁵⁹

56 *Ibid*, p. 96.

57 *The Rising Nepal*, (Kathmandu), December 17, 1985.

58 *Ibid*.

59 *The Rising Nepal*, (Kathmandu), November 7, 1992.

In course of time, King Birendra developed adamant nature in his behaviour. Because of the adamant nature of the King even the prominent figures of the PS found themselves not in a position to offer their own best suggestions. They simply began to display sycophancy and servitude to the King making him to represent the fabulous character of the olden times.

Incongenial Atmosphere:- During King Birendra's time, the palace employees, possessing excellent qualifications, did not find themselves in congenial atmosphere. Some of them began to leave the palace service to get appointment on some other jobs while some got themselves transferred outside. Some of the distinguished fellows who left palace service are:-

1. Deputy Chief of the Royal Household Renu Lal Singh left the office and dedicated his life totally in spiritual practice.
2. Joint Secretary Purushottam Prasad Subedi got himself transferred to HMG service.
3. Deputy Secretary Chandra Prakash Shrestha went USA for Ph.D. study and did not return back.
4. Librarian Madhab Prasad Sharma found himself disgusted and resigned from the palace service and joined another service outside.
5. Employees of lower positions like Ramesh Raj Kunwar and Hari Shanker Niraula left the office for higher education. They are now serving at Tribhuvan University and Nepal Bar Association respectively as Reader and Senior Advocate.

The other persons who did not have the quality of sycophancy and servility excepting qualification and calibre, were given retirement. The prominent among such fellows were Press Secretary Nagendra Prasad Shrestha, Joint Secretary Sanu Bhai Dangol, Joint Press Secretary Govinda Das Shrestha, Deputy Secretary Janardan Singh Pradhan, Section Officer Atma Ram Panta and others.

Demoralisation of Certain Employees

The Royal Palace Service Regulation of King Mahendra's period did not provide for the post of Joint Secretary in the initial phase. The Deputy Secretaries of the palace service enjoyed at that time the privileges of first class officers. It was the deputy secretaries who were then promoted to the post of secretary. Durga Bahadur Shrestha, Gehendra Man Singh were the then deputy secretaries who had been promoted to the post of secretary in this way.

With the ascent of Birendra to the throne of Nepal, the trend in the palace service changed dramatically. A post of Joint Secretary too was created in the PS and thus the deputy secretaries were made to face demoralisation or demotion as second class officers. Despite such demotion, there were certain deputy secretaries who began to enjoy daily allowances as before. They enjoyed such allowances while they were accompanying the King to his tour programmes at different development regions.

At a certain time, Deputy Secretary Jivan Kumar Maskey also got an opportunity to accompany the King on one of his development tours. At that time, Maskey refused to receive allowance of the first class officer. This event made exposure of the truth. Deputy Secretaries like Chandra Bahadur Shrestha (retired secretary), Sarada Prasad Ghimire (retired secretary) and Chet Bahadur Kunwar (present Principal Private Secretary) were made to refund the extra money which they had enjoyed as first class officers on previous tours. The event proved to be one of the prominent factors which made Jeevan Kumar Maskey to be ousted from the palace service. Maskey was made a target by these deputy secretaries since then.

Similarly Madhusudan Raj Rajbhandary was found to be demoted four tiers below from the position of Master of Ceremonies to Private Secretary of Queen Mother Ratna Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah towards the end of the year 1981. Rajbhandary was ill reputed as a corrupt and notorious figure both within and outside the palace ever since King Mahendra's period. This person is said to have many houses in different parts of the country. In reality, he was one of such persons who has had many houses. At least in his case he is from a well off family but many persons having obscure background also seems to make a huge collection of money and many palatial buildings. His nature did not change even after the demise of King Mahendra. The Queen Mother was in favour of Rajbhandary because of the special services rendered by his father *Bada Kaji* Pushpa Raj Rajbhandary to the palace. The new secretaries were jealous of Rajbhandary because of all these factors. Rajbhandary was also aware of this fact. Hence he made an alliance with the new Principal Personal Secretary Surendra Man Joshi by arranging matrimonial alliance of his son with Joshi's daughter.

In spite of this alliance, Rajbhandary could not save himself from being the target of the new secretaries. On the day when Sanjiva Reddy, the President of India, was on his state visit to Nepal, Bhandary found himself unable to make proper arrangement of the reception room, specially the master bed room, in the palace. Because of this event, he was made a target and demoted four tiers below towards the end of 1981. Later on he was elevated to his old position because of the special blessings of the Queen Mother. Such treatment to the staff is an exemplary evidence of the old feudalistic nature of the palace.

Big Bosses and Their Privileges

The palace secretaries were upgraded and put in the higher ranks even above the secretaries of the Central Secretariat of HMG. It was because of this reason, the first man of the palace service, i.e., Chief of the Royalhousehold was elevated four tiers higher than the Chief Secretary of the Central Secretariat. Similarly the second position, Master of Ceremonies, was elevated three tiers higher than the Chief Secretary while the Deputy Chief of the Royalhousehold and Deputy Master of Ceremonies two and one tiers respectively. The five Principal Secretaries of the palace secretariat-- Principal

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Secretary, Principal Military Secretary, Principal Private Secretary, Principal Personal Secretary and Principal Press Secretary--were given the status at par with the Chief Secretary of HMG. In this way, there were nine persons who enjoyed the privilege superior or in equal status with the Chief Secretary. The PS secretaries, in reality, had the full control over the HMG secretaries.

Almost all the old offices were filled up more with officer level employees more than with clerical staff. There was no need for these officers to show any caliber and quality for promotion and reward. The quality or caliber that they should possess was only the blessings from the royalties. It was because of such trend the big bosses developed the qualities of flattery and servility than of excellence in the performance of duty. A peep into the seat rolls of the retired officers of the palace service would reveal that many of officers were without any proper qualification. If to judge them from the rules and regulations of HMG, it would be found that many of them were fit only for lower clerical job.

King Birendra's attempt to have qualified staff in the PS proved to be like the old wine in the new bottle. It seems that most of the energy was spent in the struggle for existence between the old hereditary staff and the new set of staff. Awarding medals to the efficient staff is also being made a hoax as every year a large number of the high ranking medals are still being awarded to the staff of PS., who have virtually no responsible job at present. Moreover, the grant of titles and honours of old age like *Sardar*, *Meer Subba*, *Kaji*, *Bada kaji*, Honourary General is a strong evidence of the self-contradictory values of feudalism and modernity. Those minister-maker secretaries took pride in getting the honour of *Meer Subba*, *Sardar* etc. It is just like Bhimsen Thapa taking the title of General in the 19th century. Another interesting aspect is that Crown Prince Dipendra had to be satisfied with the schooling in Kathmandu while the children of palace secretaries were found to be given education in the costly and highly esteemed institutions abroad.

After the re-establishment of democracy in 1990, the task of the PS has been reduced to a large extent. The secretaries and the officers of the palace service have not to deal with the politics and administration of the country as usual. In spite of these facts, the offices which were closed were Principal Personal Secretariat and Special Petitions Department. The other office named as Department of Research has been transformed into Department of Administrative Service. Previously the Department of Research, Department of Wild Life Conservation, Department of Records and Department of Audit were headed by second class officers or deputy secretary. After the re-establishment of democracy the head of these departments was upgraded to the post of first class officer, i.e., Joint Secretaries. Moreover all the employees of the palace service were/are being facilitated with the grades counting the service period from the beginning of their career in service.

With Girija Prasad Koirala's assumption as the second elected prime minister of the parliamentary democracy, a lot of measures were being undertaken in the sphere of civil service. Among them the most significant one was the reduction of retirement age of civil servants. In accordance with the 29th amendment of the Civil Service Regulation enacted on 6th November, 1992, the civil servants are not permitted to remain in office (service) more than 30 years of service period. HMG has reduced the retirement age from 60 to 58 years. But the civil servants retiring in this way were to have pension by adding the period overdue for completing 60 years. As regards this new arrangement *The Rising Nepal* mentions:-

"His Majesty's Government has announced the 29th amendment of the Civil Service Regulation 2021 B.S. which comes into effect today. According to the Cabinet Secretariat, arrangements have been made to retire civil servants --completing the age of 58 or 30 years of service under rule 7(1) of amended Civil Service Regulation-2021 B.S.. Earlier the age of retirement was 60 under the Civil Service Regulation-2021 B.S. Civil servants retiring on completion of 58 years of age or 30 years of service will be provided a pension calculated by adding to the number of years of service the number of years to go till he completes the age of 60."⁶⁰

The palace employees too enjoy benefits of retirement at par with the civil servants and that too from HMG. But the point of departure is that the PS is not in a mood to pursue the measures of the new amendment. Big bosses like Deputy Chief of the Royalhousehold Sarada Prasad Pradhan and other are there who have completed both these criterias, -- 58 years in age and 30 years in service period. The recently retired Principal Secretaries Narayan Prasad Shrestha and Rebati Raman Khanal also seem to have completed both these criterias while the amendment came into force. In this way, the palace employees enjoy much more benefits or privileges in comparison to the civil servants of HMG.

The other facilities provided to secretaries, specially to principal secretaries, were the granting of special medical expenditures at service period and a car before giving retirement from office. Giving car to a retiring principal secretary, who did not have a car of his own, has been a trend pursued on by the King only after the re-establishment of democracy. But there are certain principal secretaries who would make a grudge even after getting so much of facilities. Rebati Raman Khanal is one of such retired principal secretaries. To quote the *Deshantar Weekly*:-

"It is rumoured that His Majesty's former Principal Secretary Rebati Raman Khanal has expressed to his old colleagues an indignant grievance against the King for not being extended his tenure of office. What did I get except an old car and a small amount of

medical expenditures at certain times? According to him, what did I not do for the King? A husband of two wives, Rebati is known as a billionaire of Kalimati. Yet he is expressing, what did I get? It is imperative that the King should make arrangement of an excellent reward while giving retirement to his secretaries."⁶¹

Despite so much of facilities provided to the palace employees, there have been certain unlucky employees who are deprived even of the minimum benefits which they could get from HMG in accordance with Civil Service Regulation.⁶² Had the Palace Service Regulation been endorsed by the HMG, the palace employees would have gone to the court asking redress on the injustices meted out to them. But that was not possible. They simply got citation which made commendation of the service rendered by them during their stay at royal palace service. (See appendix)

Palace Secretariat and Double Government

During King Birendra's time, the palace secretariat played a very dominant role in the politics and administration of Nepal. At this time, each and every major issues of the country was determined by the PS. The central secretariat of HMG remained simply as an instrument to carry on the orders of this secretariat. Thus Nepal was made to face a kind of double governments--one run by the palace secretariat and the other run by the HMG. In the process of running the government, the PS remained behind the screen without bearing any responsibility or accountability to the people. It was because of such a trend, scholars like Shaha were compelled to write:-

"Under King Birendra, the palace secretariat, which also includes the Investigation and Enquiry Centre (Janch Bujh Kendra), function not only as a relay station between the King and the government, but also as a policy-and-decision making body using the central secretariat merely as an instrument for implementing policy decisions. This has led to the kind of situation characterized by Edmund Burke as 'double government', with the central government secretariat directly responsible and accountable to the people for error in implementation of the governments policy-decisions, and the palace secretariat screened from the view and criticisms of the people, in a dominant position to dictate the policies of the government."⁶³

61 The present author is one of such employees who has so far been deprived of this facility. He had completed more than 30 years of service period but he was not facilitated to have extra benefits of the service period overdue for completing 60 years.

62 Shaha, f.n. No. 14, p. 12.

63 Prem Sharma, *50 Days of Pro-democracy Movement in Nepal-1990*, (Kathmandu: Centre for Economic Development and Administration, 1992), p. 13.

Former Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa too expresses a similar view in regard to the activities of the palace secretariat. With the words 'Bhumigat Giroh' or a cable of palace courtiers, he blamed the palace in 1972 that

"...there was dual government in Nepal, one run by the palace secretariat and the other by the central secretariat. Following the rise of this clique in outstanding position, the latter secretariat became a mere pawn in former's hands. The cable used to retain hold and made interference in national politics, in the entire administrative apparatus as well as in the higher entrepreneurs notably in industry and commerce."⁶⁴

The PS did not possess any formal or constitutional position. Somewhere in the laws, it had been mentioned that the principal secretaries and secretaries are authorised to authenticate preemptory command in the name of the King. Although there had been rules and regulations about the palace secretariat known as *Rajprasad Sewa Niyamavali* (Royal Palace Regulation), that regulation has not been formally endorsed as a regulation or law by HMG. In spite of these shortcomings, the palace secretariat had enjoyed enormous power superior even to that of the constitutional bodies. To quote Shaha

"In the king-dominated elitist politics of today's Nepal reality of power has no connection with a formal constitutional position, and informal processes of government have always been more important and effective than its formal processes. For example, the real powers and functions of the most potent government body, the royal palace secretariat, are not defined in any law or constitution of the land, but its principal officers enjoy not only a higher ceremonial rank of precedence than other public servants at the same level but also greater privilege and power in practice without commensurate responsibility or accountability for the administrative errors of omission and commission. The king's principal secretary, principal military secretary and secretary in charge of information and of foreign relations are undoubtedly more powerful today than the prime minister, the commander-in-chief or chief of the army staff and the foreign and information ministers respectively. While analysing Nepal's political and constitutional processes, one must be on one's guard against being deceived by what may superficially appear to be the reality."

Concluding Remarks

The PS does not seem to change its attitude even after the re-establishment of democracy in 1990. In spite of the reduction in administrative and political burden, it is maintaining its staff as usual. Even today, there are more than five persons who are at par with or above the status of Principal Secretary level. They enjoy the privileges and facilities at par with or more than the only Chief Secretary of HMG's Central Secretariat. Although the palace employees enjoy pension, provident fund etc. in equal status with the civil servants of HMG, the Civil Service Regulation is not abided by while giving promotion, grade, retirement etc. to them. The palace employees of all ranks enjoy grades of the total service period, a trend not justified by any of the regulations outside. The employees who had been meted out injustice are not facilitated to go to the Court for redressing their grievances-- a trend known as undemocratic even in accordance with the present constitution. These are some of the factors which make the palace secretariat to be deemed as undemocratic institution even today.



Chapter 5

RELIGION, PALACE AND NEPALESE POLITICS

Nepal is a land that claims herself to be the only Hindu kingdom of the world. She claims herself to have inherited Hinduism since the very ancient days. The other religion which she boasts to pursue and practise is Buddhism, the religion expounded by Siddhartha Gautam, the greatest prince of world peace, born in this very land. Thus Hinduism and Buddhism are the two major religions that co-exist in Nepal since the very ancient days.

Hinduism and Buddhism, after entering in Nepal, have made great integration or fusion with diverse local beliefs and faiths of the people practised in this land. It was natural for these religions to fuse themselves with these local cults because of the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual nature of the country. Moreover the tradition-oriented people of Nepal were no longer in a mood to discard their own beliefs and faiths which to some extent were of amusing nature. The integration with aboriginal cults made both these religions to assimilate in them numerous deities of local cults, the result of which was that Nepal was known also as "the land of thirty million deities."

The assimilation of these cults made both Hinduism and Buddhism to bring an offshoot known as Tantrism. Tantrism while fusing itself with the aboriginal cults like Bonpo and Shamanism deviated from the original religious path and gave rise to a religion of animistic nature practising miracle, magic and black science. The pristine purity of these religions--Hinduism and Buddhism--was no longer maintained. Both the Hindus and Buddhists forgot to be abided by the true precepts of these religions. Leaving aside the life of purity and righteousness, the Nepalese people developed some "popular folk-like religion as a replacement for more formal institutions."² The result was that those religious "monuments far more concerned with

¹ *Nepal in Pictures*, (Kathmandu: Department of Publicity and Broadcasting, n.d.).
² Ronald M. Bernier, *The Temples of Nepal*, (New Delhi: S. Chand and Company Ltd., 1978), p. 9

scholarship, contemplation, and monastic existence have been doomed by this integration of religion and everyday life."³

Strange Religious Practices

Although being a land of two great religions of the world--Hinduism and Buddhism,-- Nepal does not seem to follow these religions in true perspective. The festivals and ceremonies which the Nepalese people pursue and practise in the name of religion represent simply the traditions and cults of local nature and they do not subscribe the true spirit of these religions. In spite of such deviations, the Nepalese people are observing continuous festivals and ceremonies as a part of their religious life. As they are observing these festivals continuously, Nepal is known in the world as the land of "continuous festivals. ...the Nepalese are said to observe more festivals than there are days in a year. Hardly a day passes without some festivities, ceremonial observances or pilgrimage taking place in some part of the country or other."⁴ The Bisket Jatra, the Gaijatra, the Indraajatra, the Fulpati, the Ghantakarna etc. are some of the festivals of aboriginal nature and they do not have any relevance both with Hinduism and Buddhism.

The other feature of the traditional cult is to propitiate local divinities by offering food and sacrifices in the name of religion and utilise them for the sake of one's own benefit. That trend of propitiation gave rise to certain cults known as Shamanism and Tantrism which even the most democratic leaders of today, like Comrade Man Mohan Adhikari and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuwa, have not been able to discard. As regards such practices pursued on by the Communist Prime Minister Comrade Man Mohan Adhikari, the *Saptahik Vimarsha* mentions:-

"It was a matter of Wednesday (31st November, 1994) when Man Mohan Adhikari, the leader of UML, was administered oath of office as the prime minister of the Communist Party. On that very night when he was about to enter the Prime Minister's Residence, he sacrificed a black goat at the poll of the residence where the flag had been hoisted. The blood of the sacrificed goat was sprinkled on every nook and corner of the residence and Adhikari entered into the residence by stepping on the blood with the conviction that it will make the prime minister bold and confident while ruling the country."⁵

While the Nepalese people were living in this way under the influence of the traditional local cults as handed down to them by their forefathers, the palace in Nepal seemed to enjoy enormous authority in the name of religion. The reason behind it is that the Hindus revere the King as the incarnation of their great lord, Vishnu, while the Buddhists refer him as

³ *Ibid*, P. 9

⁴ *Nepal: A Visitor's Guide*, (Kathmandu: Department of Tourism, n.d.), p. 45

⁵ *Saptahik Vimarsha*, (Kathmandu), November 2, 1994

the Avalokiteshwara, one who always looks for the deliverance of all the suffering beings, or Bodhisatwa (future Buddha). The observance of continuous festivals and the outlook inherited by them in regard to the King made the Nepalese people much more submissive and culture oriented. And they never tried to raise voice (in those days) against the Kings of Nepal even when they tried to perpetrate barbarism and brutality.

Taking the submissive nature of the people as weakness, the palace imposed Hinduism at a certain time in the name of religion. While imposing Hinduism, the people were not prohibited to profess their traditional cults and beliefs. Hence the new trend, too, could not bring any new reformation in the traditional society. On the other hand it helped to turn Nepal into a class ridden society where the Brahmins and Kshatriyas overruled others. And, in this way, the democratic ideals of today like justice, equality, liberty etc. were thwarted.

Palace and Religious Practices

The centre has its own importance in a circle (*Mandala*) as the heart in a human body. In the same way, the palace was considered as the centre or heart of a political system in the medieval feudalistic society. Nepal has inherited still now the same political culture and, hence, the Nepalese people are not yet free from feudalistic outlook.

The central theme of palace activity in Nepal has always remained the power. In order to enhance its power, glory and grandeur, the Kings of Nepal have spread their activities on almost all the spheres of Nepal's national life. Among all these activities, the activity spread in the name of religion has left the most significant imprints in the mind of people. The imprints left in the name of religion have influenced Nepalese society so much that even today, on most of the prominent temples, the priests pray the deity to grant health and prosperity to the living King while observing daily worships. Similarly, there has been a tradition in Nepalese society that the people offer *pinda* or oblation to the departed King while performing *Sorha Shradha* ceremony of their deceased forefathers.

It has been a common trait that the kings everywhere in the world would employ deceit, treachery, poisoning, assassination etc. in order to guarantee the power, position and security of the palace. In the list of these traits, the palace in Nepal has added astrology, *Tantric* worship, propitiation of deity, practice of penance and observance of austerities too in the name of religion. It is said that Drabya Shah, the first Shah King of Gorkha, adopted Narayan Das Aryal as his *guru* or spiritual preceptor to recite *mantra* (spell or incantation) for conquering Gorkha. He had adopted Aryal as his *guru* on the advice of Ganesh Pandey. In the words of Acharya "Wishing to conquer (Gorkha), Drabya Shah went to the bank of Chepe river and there he adopted

Narayan Das Aryal, a Brahmin of gentle nature, for reciting the *mantra*.⁶

The other well known Gorkha King, Ram Shah, is recorded to have gone to Takum mountain, a sacred place of the then Parbat principality just adjacent to Damodar Lake, to practise penance and austerities. While going there, accompanied by his father-in-law Narayan Malla, he propitiated the deity Khadgapa Devi for enhancing his glory. The result was that "Khadgapa Devi, the bestower of wish fulfilling boon, was pleased with their devotion. She gave one saligram to Ram Shah and another to Narayan Malla each one engraved with the insignia of Lakshmi Narayan and Lakshmi Narayan's feet respectively."⁷

Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founder of modern Nepal, also is said to have gone to Benaras in India to get blessings from a Siddhi so that he could take possession of the Kathmandu Valley designated as Nepal. While he promised to offer Dhaiban as a birta to the Siddhi, "the Siddhi then gave a sword to Prithvinarayan Shah saying that if he or his successor would keep it within his possession while going to battle, he is sure to meet success."⁸ The other legends trace how Prithvi Narayan Shah obtained grace from Kumari while he was still a youth. According to this legend

"On the Vijaya Dasami, when the Navadurga (9 female deities) were being taken to the Mulchowk, Raja Ranjit Malla of Bhaktapur and Prithvi Narayan Shah stood together at the door of Kumari Chowk. When passing, the Bhairava gave the prasada to Prithvi Narayan instead to Ranjit Malla; and in like manner the Kumari presented him with a blue lotus."⁹

The history of Nepal is replete with so many evidences like this which testify how the palace had tried to enhance its power by practising occult practices in the name of religion. A peep into the present history of Nepal also is sure to reveal that the Shah kings, specially King Mahendra, had utilised astrology, mysticism, propitiation of deities and *Tantrik* worship for enhancing his own glory and grandeur. Before entering into the subject-matter, the author wishes to throw a few light on the religion to be pursued by the palace and on the strange traditions practised by the Nepalese people in the name of religion.

Palace and Religion

Prior to the introduction of democracy in 1951, the palace in Nepal was the supreme authority of the country. Although the powers of the palace

⁶ Hari Prasad Sharma Acharya, *Gorakshya-Shah-Bansha*, (Varanasi: Vidya Bhawan, 2022 V.E.), p. 20

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 63

⁸ Bikram Jit Hasrat, *History of Nepal*, (Punjab: V.V. Research Institute Book Agency, 1970), p. 63

⁹ Jagdish Chandra Regmi, *The Kumari of Kathmandu*, (Kathmandu: Heritage Research, 1991), p. 30

were exercised by some other authority for a certain period, there were no other agencies in the country to challenge the position of the institution. All the powers and authorities of the country emanated from this institution. In this way, the palace represented a kind of supreme personification which had the power to change even the courses of the country. Considering all these factors, the ancient Hindu political thinkers had taken the sovereign or King as the maker of ages. To quote Panikkar

"How universally accepted this view was may be seen from the fact that Manu, Narada, Gautama and other writers on *Smriti* elaborate and emphasise the point. For example, it is stated in *Manu Smriti* that the various ways in which a sovereign behaves constitutes the *Krita*, *Treta*, *Dwapara* and *Kali* ages--periods of time based on quality. The same idea is repeated by other *Smriti* writers (*Narada*, X VIII - 20.33, *Gautam*, VIII- I- II)."¹⁰

The most revolutionary thinker Shukra emphasises this fact further with the words "the sovereign is the cause of setting foot of customs and usages (social legislation) and movements and hence is the cause and maker of time. If the age or time were the cause, there could be no virtue in the actors."¹¹

A study of these view-points suggests that the palace did not have any creed or cult to pursue in the name of religion. The main faith that it should follow in the name of religion is to look upon the welfare of the people and thus to lead the country towards peace and prosperity. The main deity that the palace should worship was the country and to exploit the country for its own selfish ends was the greatest sacrilege that it had to face. The oath of office administered to a king at the time of coronation ceremony also emphasises on this very fact and the oath runs as:- "Between the night I was born and the night I die, whatever good I might have done, my heaven, my life and my progeny may be deprived of, if I oppress you. I will see the growth of the country regarding it as God himself. I will never be arbitrary."¹²

The oath taken by Mahendra, late King of Nepal, while being consecrated as the King of Nepal also attests the same. The oath administered to King Mahendra while he was being coronated runs as:- "All that is against the moral codes, all that is against nature and politics, I shall not do and I always hold up the sovereignty of the nation and country as sacred as the Divinity and I will not be arbitrary at all cost."¹³

Strictly speaking, the main religion which the palace has to pursue and practise is the protection of righteousness. The palace is invested with the

¹⁰ K.M. Panikkar, *The State and the Citizen*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1956), p. 116

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 117

¹² Somnath Dhar, *Kautilya and the Arthashastra*, (New Delhi: Marwah Publications, 1981), p. 51

¹³ Adya Charan Rajbhandary, *The Coronation Book of Their Majesties of Nepal*, (n.p., n.d.), p. 51

right to declare war and to conquer enemies but it has no right to destroy what it wills. So far as the palace is concerned, its main duty is to facilitate every amenity to the people. If the palace failed in this mission, the king "forfeits the right to be the king and has the option to quit the country."¹⁴ Similarly pointing to the religion to be pursued by the palace, Kautilya in his political treatise *Arthashastra*, writes:-

"The king should find his religion in promptness of action; the discharge of his duties in a religious sacrifice, and readiness to attend to all alike in his consecration; in the happiness of his subjects lies his own happiness, in their welfare his welfare; not his own pleasure but theirs shall he consider. Ever active shall he be in the discharge of his duties; for in activity lies the root of well-being."¹⁵

Hinduism in Nepal

Hinduism is one of the oldest religions still practised in the world. The *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, the holy texts of Hinduism, teach mankind the path leading to *nirvana* or salvation which can be won only by the union of individual soul with world soul. The "*nirvana* comes when a person can free himself of all worldly preoccupations; only when he has fully realized the temporary quality of this life can he achieve union with the world soul."¹⁶

Despite possessing such a philosophy, Hinduism is discredited as an irrational religion even today because of its narrow outlook and the inhuman traditions pursued on by its followers. Among the so many inhuman traditions pursued on by its followers, the prominent one is taken as caste system. It is such a tradition which discriminates one man from another only on the basis of birth. In this system, the people of Ksatriya caste only are authorised to rule the country. Similarly the Brahmins, the people of higher caste, stay at the apex of the political system and exploit the people of the lower caste known as the Shudras. The Shudras are prohibited even to enter the prominent Hindu shrines, places etc.

A religion propagating such tradition was imposed for the first time in Nepal during King Jaya Sthiti Malla's period. It was consolidated furthermore by the Gorkha king, Prithvi Narayan Shah, after the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley. The religion got deeply rooted in the kingdom after the unification of Nepal by his successors. The same trend was pursued strictly later on by the Rana prime ministers too. The result was that the laws of the state were governed by Hindu scriptures and interpreted by the *dharmadhikar* or *rajguru* (royal priest).

¹⁴ Dhar, f.n. No. 12, p. 44

¹⁵ S. N. Sharma, *Our Human Heritage*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1964), p. 41

¹⁶ *The cultural Library with an Encyclopaedic Index Vol. 10*, (New York: Parents' Magazine Cultural Institute, 1965), p. 261

During the rule of Rana prime ministers, attempts were made to deify the king as the incarnation of god unlike in the past. With these attempts, the Rana prime ministers tried to isolate the kings from the Nepalese people, so that the royalty in Nepal may not be able to play any trick to regain its lost authority. In this connection, the kings were also prohibited to visit the Swayambhoonath, the prominent shrine of the Buddhists. The words of Agrawal, in this context, may be given as following:-

"Nepalese monarchy was reduced to imbecility and was completely depoliticised, successfully isolated from the people, politics and government. The Ranas made the King a prisoner in the Palace and in the nachghar, but proclaimed him outside as God Vishnu incarnate."¹⁷

Although being deified as Vishnu-incarnate, the Shah kings of Nepal have not been able to leave their temptation to declare themselves as the Kshatriya Kings. Under the influence of Hindu ethos, they have tried to identify themselves as the descendants of Rajput dynasty of Chittor in India. They tried to do so because the Rajputs were highly prized in India as well as in Nepal as the pure Kshatriyas. The traditional history of Nepal also have endorsed that the ancestry of the Shah kings belonged to the Rajput dynasty of Chittor, India, who had migrated to Nepal in quest of rehabilitation. Countering this theory of traditional history, a new theory has been put forward recently by the well-known anthropologist of Nepal, Dor Bahadur Bista. The new theory traces the Shah kings as of Magar descent in lieu of the Rajputs of India. As the new theory seems to be much more authentic in comparison to the former ones, this theory is being incorporated here for the knowledge of the general readers. And the theory runs as:-

"Micha' and 'Khancha' were the two names of the ancestors of our king (King Birendra). They are taken sometimes as the Muslims even because of the very names. But in the Magar tongue, the words 'Micha' and 'Khancha' represent 'the eldest' and 'the youngest'. Later on when the Muslim influence began to rise, the suffix Singh, Khan etc. were added in these names. If they had migrated (fled) from Chittor Garh, why should the Rajputs use the words the eldest (Mincha) and the youngest (Khancha)? Digbandhan Sen, the maternal uncle of Prithvinarayan Shah is a Magar. His mother is also of Magar race. In Nepal, there are three Goddess temples (of the Shah dynasty),-- the Lasargadevi of Palpa, the Gorakhkali of Gorkha and Manakamana. The priests of these temples are only the Magars. The people of other races cannot enter into these temples. To add to it, swines (pigs) are sacrificed to the Lasargadevi of Palpa. (This temple is situated at Syanga district and is known also by the name

17 Hem Narayan Agrawal, *Nepal: A Study in Constitutional Change*, (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., 1980), p. 5

Alamdevi.) Liquors too are offered to her. These days, wild boars are being sent (from the palace) for sacrificing to this deity in lieu of the swine (pig)."¹⁸

The imposition of Hinduism, in this way, made Nepal to turn into a class ridden society "characterised by a complete dominance of the lower castes by the higher castes in all aspects of life-- social, political and economic. Moreover, the whole society was compartmentalised between the rulers and the ruled."¹⁹ Thus there were before the dawn of democracy in 1951, two distinct classes, "one was of the rulers who had religious sanctity and who regarded it as their birth-right to rule over the country and the other were the masses who were destined to be ruled in a manner their rulers liked."²⁰ The trend did not change in Nepal even after the re-establishment of democracy in 1990. Even today, the people of lower caste or depressed people are suffering from some sort of humiliation or suppression.

Religious Activities during Rana (King Tribhuvan's) Period

Religion in Nepal remained intact before the dawn of democracy in 1951. At this time, King Tribhuvan was not in a position to bring about changes in the orthodoxy of religious traditions. The *raj guru* (royal priest) remained influential as before and commanded authority over all religious matters. This trend discouraged every effort to bring about reformations in the religious tradition of Nepal. It was not true that certain leaders had not emerged in the national scenario to bring about changes in the religious attitudes of the then Nepal. But these leaders were suppressed. Even the propagation of the true spirit of Hinduism was prohibited. Some of the suppressions meted out to the then religious leaders during King Tribhuvan's period, specially before the dawn of democracy, may be summed up as:-

- a. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Arya Samaj movement of India influenced the Nepalese people, too. As this movement threatened the supremacy of the Brahmanic class, the privileged Brahmins advised the Rana rulers to initiate stern action against the leaders of Arya Samaj movement. As a result, the Rana Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher awarded to its leader, Madhav Raj Joshi, two years' imprisonment and also a punishment of exile. In regard to these punishments, the late martyr Shukra Raj Shastri quotes the words of Chandra Shamsher:- "Madhav Raj, you have been fortunate enough. You will be sentenced two years' imprisonment. Even after the

¹⁸ Dor Bahadur Bista, "Ahileka Rajako Purkhaharu Magar Hun," *Janaastha Weekly*, (Kathmandu), May 7, 1995

¹⁹ R.S. Chauhan, *The Political Development in Nepal 1950-70*, (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1971), p. 8

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 8

imprisonment, you are not permitted to stay in Nepal."²¹

- b. "A Lama from Tibet came and conducted learned discourse on Buddhism. The prayer meetings were attended by a large number of the Buddhist laity. By and by it was reported to the authorities that the Buddhist upasakas (members of laity) in the excess of their devotion to the Lama had touched his feet with their foreheads and even partook of the leftover of his dinner. The Shakyas were then instigated to declare the Upasakas outcastes and refused to partake of rice in any ceremonial dinner with them."²²
- c. "A Brahmin Pandit, Muralidhar by name, gave discourses on the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. With appropriate interpolation of references to the happenings in India and elsewhere in the world, he made his dissertations very spicy. The Rana authorities very much feared that his sermon might have some corrupting influence on the people. He was given some serious warnings to begin with. But when he did not heed them, he was arrested and given three years imprisonment. Later he was sent on exile to Benaras."²³
- d. "Sometime later Shri Shukra Raj Shastri gave a discourse on Geeta in Indra Chowk. He had not spoken for half an hour when two police men came and picked him up. He was taken to the presence of Maharaja Juddha Shumsher, who roundly chastized him for the breach of the rule that only caste Brahmins could make dissertations of holy books. When the fellow refused to apologize, he was awarded a sentence of six year's imprisonment."²⁴
- e. Juddha Shamsher, another Rana Prime Minister, became so afraid of the movement that he hanged Shukraraj Sastri, the leader of Arya Samaj movement in Nepal. To quote Vakpati Raj Joshi and Chandra Kanta Devi "Thereafter, Mahendra Bahadur Subba and Mohan Shamsher relayed that Shukra Raj be given capital punishment along with the confiscation of his portion of property."²⁵
- f. "During the rule of the Rana Prime Minister Juddha Shamsher, the Buddhist monks of Kathmandu had been expelled from the

²¹ Shukra Raj Shastri, *Shri Maharshi Madhav Raj Joshike Jivan Charitra*, (Kathmandu: Vakpati Raj Joshi and Chandra Kanta Devi, 2015 V.E.), p. 354

²² Daman Raj Tuladhar, *Contemporary Nepal (1945-1955)*, (Kathmandu: Laxmi Publications, 1980), p. 37

²³ *Ibid*, p. 49

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 49

²⁵ Shastri, f.n. No. 21, p. 640

country at the instigation of the Brahman priests."²⁶

With the introduction of democracy in 1951, the religious tradition in Nepal became flexible to a certain extent. The Buddhist monks of Theravad school began to preach Buddhism in its true spirit. King Tribhuvan began to contact certain Buddhist monks and began to visit the Swyambhoonath temple. To quote Aswaghosh

"There was a good relation between His Majesty and Bhikkhu Amritananda. His Majesty began to visit Anandakuti Vihar and listened to the discourses on the Buddha's teachings ... Sometimes he used to say, the Shah kings are supposed not to visit Swyambhoo. Lo, I did come, perhaps it would not be a sacrilege."²⁷

Similarly, the *Nepal Trade Directory 1959* too traces that "In 1951, the late King Tribhuvan visited 'Anandakuti Vihar' (Buddhist temple), thus breaking the age-old tradition forbidding Gurkha rulers of Nepal from entering a Buddhist temple."²⁸

King Tribhuvan further took initiative in organising Fourth World Buddhist Conference in Nepal which was inaugurated and adjourned by his son King Mahendra two years after his death. In the words of Joshi and Rose "The conference lasted four days, and King Mahendra personally announced its adjournment. He ended by thanks giving to all the delegates for accepting King Tribhuvan's invitation, issued two years earlier, to meet in Nepal."²⁹ Similarly King Tribhuvan received the sacred relics of Sariputra and Mahamoudglyan the No. 1 and 2 disciples of Lord Buddha with reverence. As regards the receiving ceremony of these relics, *The Coronation Book of Their Majesties* traces that "In memory of the same sacred relics so devotedly received by the then king (Tribhuvan), a memorable meeting was held at Tundikhel."³⁰

Religious Activities During King Mahendra's Rule

Religious Outlook:- Since the time, when he was the crown prince, King Mahendra knew how his father, King Tribhuvan, had have to suffer from set-backs in politics because of his liberal outlook and virtuous nature. Although fortune had favoured him, King Tribhuvan was not in a position to wield his authority in Nepalese politics. He had become almost like a tool in the hands of the Indian government. Because of his succumbing to the Indian government, the political leaders of Nepal had become antagonistic to King

²⁶ Bhuwan Lal Joshi and Leo E. Rose, *Democratic Innovations in Nepal*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), p. 244

²⁷ Bhikkhu Aswaghosh, "Nepalko Itihasma Rajako Sthan", *Dristi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 27, 1994

²⁸ *Nepal Trade Directory*, (New Delhi: Nepal Trading Corporation, 1959), p. 136

²⁹ Joshi and Rose, f.n. No. 26, p. 244

³⁰ Rajbhandary, f.n. No. 13, p. 95

Tribhuvan. All these events left a wrong impact upon King Mahendra and made him a practical man following not to any liberal outlook and virtuous nature. Although he posed himself as the only Hindu king, Mahendra was never a strong supporter of Hinduism. Instead, he exploited Hindu sentiments to enhance his own glory and grandeur.

A peep into King Mahendra's career reveals that he pursued more to Machiavellian outlook than to any religion. Following Machiavellian outlook, he gave prominence specifically to the principle 'end justifies means.' He resorted every kind of unscrupulous means and methods in order to secure his personal gains. In order to consolidate his own power, position and glory, he perpetrated not merely deceit and treachery to the political and other leaders but equally misutilised mystic and other powers to smash their overriding influences. A peep into an unfamiliar career of King Mahendra is sure to reveal how he pursued most of these things in the name of religion.

Secret relations with Mystics:- As a crown prince, Mahendra was a man of frustrated nature. The family members, his own parents specially, were not in a mood to extend support and co-operation to Mahendra because of his stubborn or self-assertive nature. It was because of the frustration in early life, he came into contact with various mystics, tantrics, astrologers etc. very secretly. Among the so many persons whom he contacted and confided most in this connection were:-

- a. Niraja Prasad Sharma, a lame pandit from Palpa district and a disciple of Bula baba, the well known yogi of India of the then period;
- b. Dibya Mangal Joshi, the court astrologer;
- c. Indra Nath Aryal and his group including his brother Lekh Nath, the mystics representing the lineage of Narayan Das Aryal of Gorkha kingdom. These mystics had the capacity of invoking the ghouls (*vetal*) and relay its message in the ears of others too;
- d. Lt. General Dhana Shamsher Rana, the well-known tantrik of Nepal and others.

At a secret consultations with them, Mahendra was assured of higher prospectus in future by almost all of them. The disciple of Bula Baba, Niraja Prasad Sharma, had conveyed the message of his *guru* that he (Mahendra) could succeed in his mission only when he would resort to the use of sword as his best friend. In this way, he had hinted that only by the use of power or force, he would be able to earn a high profile in his career. The court astrologer, Dibya Mangal Joshi, and other astrologers too had pinpointed the yoke of rosary (Mala Yoga) while casting glance on King Mahendra's birth horoscope. In their opinion, King Mahendra was sure to win international repute by overcoming every difficulties because of this yoke,—a yoke where the planets remain serially like a rosary without any gap or break in between. (See appendix)

Indra Nath Aryal and his brother Lekh Nath Aryal, the residents of

Naradevi at Bhulukha Dega (the temple of owls) had related Crown Prince Mahendra how they had been inheriting the lineage transmission of the mystic cult of their predecessor, Narayan Das Aryal. According to them, Narayan Das Aryal had helped Drabya Shah, the first Shah king of Gorkha, to succeed the throne of Gorkha by utilising his mystic power. They had, by their mystical powers, transmitted the words of their deity (ghoul or *betal*) to the ears of Crown Prince Mahendra. These fellows had assured the crown prince of their full support to raise him to higher status by utilising their mystical formulas as their predecessor had once done to Drabya Shah. Similarly Lt. General Dhana Shamsher Rana also had assured him of his full support for enhancing his glory and grandeur.

Experimentation of Mystical Force:- Because of these assurances from the mystics, tantriks and astrologers, Mahendra became a King of over-confident nature. So he began to demonstrate his stubborn or self-assertive nature even by minimising the words of his father and other political leaders. As regards the self-assertive nature of King Mahendra, the words of Joshi and Rose are:-

"But even as Crown Prince he had demonstrated a self-assertive character and a proclivity for experimentation on occasion. At the time of his first marriage, to a Rana Princess in 1940, for instance, he ignored the royal tradition of wedding two wives at the same time. Again, after the death of his first wife, the Crown Prince married his late wife's sister in spite of strong vocal opposition to the match from various sources. King Tribhuvan implied his displeasure by departing for Calcutta a few days before the ceremony. Political party leaders objected that a marriage alliance with an a Rana family was inappropriate for the monarchy in democratic Nepal. But Mahendra proved to be unbending and unresponsive to criticism, even though at one point his insistence upon the marriage seemed to threaten his succession to the throne."³¹

In order to win favour from his father and other political leaders, Crown Prince Mahendra utilised some of these mystics to perform secret rites.³² As a result, the voices against him gradually subsided and he began to assert himself more and more. The King is also said to have implored Ganesh Man Singh, the leader of Nepali Congress, to approach and convince his father King Tribhuvan in regard to his marriage.

Exchanging Scimitar with Pachali Bhairab:- The self-assertive nature of Mahendra got much more enhanced when he got the opportunity to exchange his *khadga* (scimitar) with that of the local god Pachali Bhairab in

³¹ Joshi and Rose, f.n. No. 26, p. 179

³² Most of these mystics would assemble in the waiting room of the palace secretariat as a routine work. They would have *darshan* [meeting] of King Mahendra when he would be entering to his office room. The present author had have many opportunities to meet almost all of them and to have a chat on their undertakings too.

1954. In this year, King Tribhuvan had been in Switzerland in connection with medical treatment. At this time, the twelve-year festival of Pachali Bhairab was being organised at Kastamandap. It had been a tradition for the ruling king that he be there to exchange his own scimitar with that of Bhairab on such occasions.³³ As King Tribhuvan was out of station, it was not possible for him to attend the ceremony personally. Matrika Prasad Koirala, the then prime minister, was there to attend the ceremony on behalf of King Tribhuvan. But Pachali Bhairab denied to exchange scimitar with Prime Minister Koirala. Crown Prince Mahendra, later on, was made to attend the ceremony and also to exchange his own scimitar with the scimitar (*khadga*) of Pachali Bhairab.³⁴ King Mahendra felt himself much more emboldened because this event symbolised that Pachali Bhairab had given him his authority to rule the country.

Renovation of Temples and Shrines:- King Mahendra succeeded to the throne of Nepal after the demise of his father King Tribhuvan in 1955. At that time, he found the Nepalese people still living in the charming circle of culture and tradition. They practised culture and tradition mostly in the name of religion. Except pursuing the hereditary culture and traditions, the people neither cared for public welfare nor for politics. Instead of pursuing the precepts of developed religions, they were practising the rituals of animistic character or say of traditional religion. They did not have the courage to go against such rituals because of their god fearing nature too. In order to exploit the sentiments of these god-fearing people, the King undertook the task of renovating almost all the old temples and shrines of the country, specially of the Kathmandu valley. He undertook the task immediately after becoming the King of Nepal. While doing so, he did not make any discrimination between Hindu and Buddhist temples. To quote the HMG's version

"When King Mahendra commanded the restoration and rehabilitation of the holy shrines and historic monuments, he meant all of them without any discrimination or reservation. The result we can see in and about the streets and squares of the Kathmandu Valley and the remotest villages of this pious land, this Home of Gods."³⁵

In order to carry on the renovation task, King Mahendra had constituted a renovation committee under the then Acting Commissioner, *Mir Subba* Vishnu Mani Acharya. He had also donated 2,00,000 rupees for that purpose. In the words of Pandit Sigdel

³³ The festival was like a dance drama being organised every twelve year. The participants of the dance drama would wear masks of different divinities and dance in tune with the sound of cymbals and drums.

³⁴ In a talk with late Narendra Raj, the *Khajanchi* (cashier) of *Mulkikhana*, he had once relayed this matter to the author. The author confirmed this matter from other sources, too, when he was attending His Majesty King Birendra in his programme of exchanging *khadga* with Bhadrakali

³⁵ *Nepal...*, f.n. No. 1,

"... in order to carry on renovation tasks of the temples (of divinities), roads, bridges and gutters of the Kathmandu valley for the time being, His Majesty constituted a commission under the Valley Commissioner and granted a sum of Rs. 2,00,000. From among the total outlay, the commission was authorised to expend Rs.1,00,000 for Kathmandu, Rs. 50,000 for Lalitpur and another Rs. 50,000 for Bhaktapur."³⁶

Performance of Koti Havan and Rudra Maha Yagna: After his ascent to the throne of Nepal, King Mahendra came into contact with many learned people of the country. While coming into contact, he felt that the only leading and learned figures who had controlled the society, politics and religion were mostly the Brahmins. That made him realize that without pleasing the Brahmin community, he would not be able to consolidate his power. So he tried to handle that caste group in one or the other way. But when he contacted the educated Brahmins, he found them divided mainly into two groups,—one led by Pandit Som Nath Sigdyal and the other by Pandit Padam Prasad Bhattarai. In order to win favour from both these groups, he firstly came into contact with Soma Nath Sigdyel and asked him to perform *Koti Havan (Yagna)* for enhancing his own glory and grandeur. In 1959, this group performed Koti Havan at the premises of the royal palace for about two months. The *havan* performed in the name of Goddess Gayatri completed with grand success and thus made an impact both in the circle of the Brahmins as well as the religious minded people.

King Mahendra deployed the other group at a later period. The group led by Padam Prasad Bhattarai was made to perform *Rudra Maha Yagna* at Deopatan area in Kathmandu. But the *yagna* performed by this group proved failure. *Pandit* Padam Prasad Bhattarai got himself paralysed while he was performing the *yagna* as its chairman. However, the two *yagnas* helped King Mahendra to gain popularity among the Brahmins of Nepal and also to enhance his glory as a pious King.³⁷

Mystical Experiments: The *Koti Havan* and *Rudra Maha Yagna*, which the King made to perform, were only the show-pieces before the public. The main emphasis which the King had laid on was on the experimentation of mystical power of divinities. In the task, the group of Indra Nath Aryal and his brother Lekh Nath Aryal played the leading part. The group took King Mahendra into confidence and performed secret mystical formulas for enhancing the King's position. Whether it was because of this performance or not, the King was pleased with this group when he found that there was no one to go against him even while he dismissed the popularly elected government of the Nepali Congress under Prime Minister Bisweshwar

³⁶ Somnath Sigdel (ed), *Sudhar Karya Vivarna*, (Kathmandu: Somnath Sigdel, 2017 V.E.)

³⁷ The author had got the opportunity to be associated with the first *yagna* in connection with arrangement of firewood [*samidha*]. While on the other, he had seen Pandit Padma Prasad Bhattarai suffering from paralysis at Deopatan.

Prasad Koirala.

Hence, the King made grants of abundant acres of land to that group at Morang district. The person who helped to lumber and sell the forest woods was rewarded with the position of Assistant Minister.³⁸ Indra Nath Aryal once had related to this author how he had once received two hundred thousand rupees to perform pooja at Kamakhya Kamrup in Assam, India. According to him, he had spent this amount by offering silver and gold ornaments to different deities who had assembled there as the participants of 12-year festival.

The other mystics who implicitly came into contact with King Mahendra were Ganesh Man Pradhan of Tyouda, Kathmandu; Jitananda Joshi of Kirtipur; and Ananda Muni Vajracharya of Jyabahal, Kathmandu. Among these mystics, Ganesh Man Pradhan was a slender old man who was provided an opportunity to experiment mystical power and formula in order to enhance the glory and grandeur of the palace. Jitananda Joshi, on the other hand, was a well known Tantrik who performed the task of traditional healer and consultant. This mystic used traditional broom while treating or exorcising hysterical and other diseases. Joshi was a mystic blessed by King Mahendra to be trained in occult science at Madras in India. In the words of David N. Gellner and Uttam Sagar Shrestha "By his own account Jitananda was sent to Madras in South India by Mahendra Sarkar i.e. by the king or the government, in order to learn how to cure madness by Tantric means."³⁹

The other mystic Ananda Muni Vajracharya was a well known Buddhist Tantric. This Tantric had performed miracle in order to bring down rain water in the year 1956 by invoking *nagas* or serpent kings. In the year 1956, there was no timely rainfall in the country. All the rivers and ponds had dried up owing to scarcity of water. The people began to face the problem of drinking water. King Mahendra tried every traditional means to cause rain. He went in the midst of the Baagmati river and milked the cow. The twelve-year well was made to be cleansed and *poojas* and prayers were offered at different temples and shrines begging for the rain water. But all these attempts proved failure.

At such a juncture, Ananda Muni Vajracharya appeared in the palace. He asked a sum of Rs. 300 (three hundred rupees) for performing *naag puja*s or propitiating dragons or serpent kings at ten places. He asked the money in order to cause rain by propitiating them. He also promised to refund the money if he did not succeed in his mission. As an experiment, King Mahendra allocated the sum of money. The performance worked well. Since that year a sum of Rs. 300, later on Rs. 500, was allocated annually to Ananda Muni Vajracharya from the regular budget of Department of Financial

³⁸ The person who became Assistant Minister in this way was known as Chhimananda Mahato of Kailali district.

³⁹ Gerard Toffin (ed), *Nepal: Past and Present*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1993), p. 136

Management (*Kharcha Bibhag*) of the palace. After the death of Ananda Muni Bajracharya, his son Nanya Muni Bajracharya submitted a petition in 1992 requesting that he be provided the opportunity to perform *naag pooja* in place of his late father. King Birendra's response to this petition was negative.⁴⁰ A study of these activities is sure to reveal how King Mahendra had utilised these mystics in order to enhance his own glory and grandeur and also to evoke public sentiments towards the palace. King Mahendra seemed to have studied and followed Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. All sorts of methods and strategies suggested by Kautilya seem to have influenced King Mahendra.

Misutilisation of Yogi Narahari Nath:- Yogi Narahari Nath was another person whom King Mahendra used to achieve his political design. With King Mahendra's indirect blessings, the *Karmavir Mahamandal*, a socio-religious association organised by Narahari Nath Yogi, transformed itself into a political party and participated in the 1959 general elections. Later on that party was used as a very powerful machinery for launching agitation against the then Nepali Congress government before the *coup d'etat* (of 1960) staged by King Mahendra. And the result was that a mob of about 200 followers of the Yogi attacked the district headquarter of Gorkha on 25th October, 1960. "As it threatened to loot government offices, police opened gunfire to protect government property from the rowdy elements. Firing resulted in about half-a-dozen casualties."⁴¹ In regard to Yogi Narahari Nath's affiliation with King Mahendra, the *Weekly Suruchi* writes:-

"He was inspired into politics in the year 2015 V.E. (1958). He was an opponent of the socialistic principles pursued on by the Congress Party. In order to activate himself in favour of King Mahendra, this yogi, committed to traditional line, set up an organisation namely Karmavir Mahamandal in the year 2016 V.E. (1959). History traces clearly how this yogi played a prominent role in bringing the year 2017 V.E. (*coup d'etat* of 1960)."⁴²

Similarly the commentary made by Joshi and Rose, in connection with Karmavir Mahamandal's attitude and activities against the then Parliamentary Political System, runs as:-

"The Karmavir Mahamandal, whose political program aimed at the reinstatement of Nepal's ancient religious and cultural traditions, could not have chosen a better place than Gorkha to launch an agitation against the Nepali Congress government. Leaders of the Karmavir Mahamandal had often decried the institution of parliamentary democracy and elections as alien to the history and

⁴⁰ The present author himself was the person who, as the head of Department of Financial Management, had briefed the synopsis of Nanya Muni Vajracharya's petition to King Birendra.

⁴¹ Tribhuvan Nath, *The Nepalese Dilemma 1960-74*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1975), p. 201

⁴² *Suruchi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), June 3, 1995

culture of Nepal, and had upheld the appropriateness of a benevolent absolute monarchy, extolling the superior virtues of the traditions and policies of the Shah dynasty over those of contemporary political parties."⁴³

Tracing a very similar picture of the *yogi's* allegiance with King Mahendra, Nath also writes:-

"Evidences deposed by the government officials of Gorkha revealed that in a number of public speeches, *Yogi* Narahari Nath told his audience that the King had given him a donation of Rs. 500. A copy of the letter that claimed to have received from the Military Secretary to the King was found on a search of his person, and produced by local officials as evidence before the Commission."⁴⁴

And similarly the *Weekly Rastrapukar* writes in this context:-

"A few days before the scandal of 15th December, 1960, the government traced from *Yogi* Narahari Nath a letter. It was a letter written by General Sher Bahadur Malla, the then Military Secretary to the King, written under the command of him (the King). In the letter, Malla had asked *Yogiji* to contact the King for launching agitation at Gorkha. The letter brought dissension between the King and Prime Minister B.P. Koirala. As a result, King Mahendra dismissed the government on 15th December, 1960, arrested (political) leaders and banned (political) parties."⁴⁵

Elevation of Bhakta Sthaneshwar:- The other mystic who got elevated during King Mahendra's period was *Bhakta* Sthaneshwar. *Bhakta* Sthaneshwar was elevated as *Mahaprabhu* because of the extra-ordinary power of forecasting possessed by him. The prominent forecasts made by him were in regard to the landslide that took place at Ridi in Palpa district and the bomb throwing to King Mahendra at Janakpur district. To quote the book *Stray Sentiments* "So had he been found to be successful in his predictions about Janakpur scandal and landslide at Ridi. This is known to many."⁴⁶

Bhakta Sthaneshwar was a public figure unlike Indra Nath Aryal and his group. He mixed himself among the mass and demonstrated his extraordinary calibre by reviewing the life events of the people and also by his forecastings. King Mahendra got himself highly impressed by this mystic because of his success in the forecastings. Really "on 22 January (1962), a bomb was thrown at his car in Janakpur when he was going to attend a

⁴³ Joshi and Rose, f.n. No. 26, p. 360

⁴⁴ Nath, f. n. No. 35, p. 33

⁴⁵ *Rastrapukar Weekly*, (Kathmandu), January 26, 1994

⁴⁶ Sanu Bhai Dangol, *Stray Sentiments*, (Kathmandu: Gautam Bajracharya and Laxman Dangol, 1993), p. 33

reception and the rostrum where he was to speak was dynamited."⁴⁷ It had happened as had been forecasted by him. So the King took this mystic into confidence and sent him among the mass, specially at the areas where the anti-monarchical groups had their stronghold, elevating him with the title of *Mahaprabhu* (Great Lord). While sending him in this way, the King also deployed spys and security guards secretly for tracing out anti-monarchical elements and for security purposes. Wherever Bhakta Sthaneshwar did go, he performed the *pooja* and *yagna* and distributed prasad to the people after completing the choric chanting Hail (Jai) to His Majesty!, Hail to Her Majesty! While doing so, he also preached to the people assembled there "to follow the path of devotion, i.e., towards God, Country and King and gave blessings to this end."⁴⁸ King Mahendra elevated *Bhakta* Sthaneshwar in this way in order to secure his own personal ends.

Emphasis on Hindu Ethos:- Mahendra was a King who laid emphasis more on power than on religion. He got inspiration from foreign lands, especially from India, to declare himself as the only Hindu ruler of the world. During his visit to India and Ceylon, he found the Hindu people of these countries venerating to him and to Nepal with deep faith and reverence. At a certain time, when he visited India, he found himself enjoying the privileges which were denied even to the president and prime minister of India. As regards the privileges which the kings of Nepal enjoy in India because of their affiliation with Hindu religion, the *Indian Express* expresses:-

"It may be pointed out here that the Kings of Nepal enjoy two rare privileges in India. First, a King of Nepal alone can mount the Throne of Diamonds at the Puri Jagannath Temple for worship. Even the Maharaja of Puri, who is the owner of the temple, is denied the privilege. Secondly, a King of Nepal is one of three who along with the chief priest and the Jagatguru of Sringeri Mutt are entitled to worship in the sanctum sanctorium of the Rameshwara temple."⁴⁹

The veneration of the Hindu people abroad made King Mahendra believe that he can exploit Hindu sentiments all over the world by declaring Nepal as the Hindu kingdom. A few words expressed in reverence to King Mahendra during his visit to India and Ceylon may be given as:-

a. The words of Governor of Madras

"Nepal being the only independent Hindu Kingdom, her glory is shared by India."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Narendra Goyal, *Political History of Himalayan States*, (New Delhi: Cambridge Book and Stationery Stores, 1966), p. 124

⁴⁸ Sanu Bhai Dangol, "My Impression of Shri Bhakta Sthaneshwar" *Ranjham* Vol. 4, No. 2, (Kathmandu: June 12, 1968), p. 16

⁴⁹ *Indian Express*, (Chittoor, India), December 20, 1964

⁵⁰ H. M. King Mahendra, *Proclamations Speeches and Messages* Vol. 1, (Kathmandu: Department of Publicity, 1967), P. 28.

- b. The words of K. Bethianathan and others while presenting address of welcome to King Mahendra on behalf of the Hindu people of Colombo

"Being the only Hindu King of an independent sovereign state, Your Majesty's arrival at this country has become in fact an event of special significance for the Hindus who occupy one-fifth of the entire Ceylonese population. Nepal has been hallowed much by the Shaiva image of the most adorable Pashupatinath in the capital and the Kailash mountain in the border area. We are very much grateful for the kind presence of Your Majesty at our midst even though for a few moment."⁵¹

Although the King wished to declare Nepal as the Hindu kingdom, he did not have the courage to do so at the initial phase. The mounting influence of the political leaders had pressurised him not to do so. Hence he posed himself as the Hindu King while granting *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal-1959*. Article 1 (iii) of this constitution clearly states that "In this Constitution, His Majesty means the King for the time being reigning, being a Shahi descendent of His Late Majesty King Prithvi Narayan Shah and adherent of Aryan Culture and Hindu Religion."⁵² Later on when he had been successful in suppressing almost all the political parties and their leaders, i.e., after staging the *coup d' etat* of 1960, he declared Nepal as the Hindu Kingdom. The words incorporated in Article 3.1 of *The Constitution of Nepal* in this regard are:- "Nepal is an independent, indivisible and sovereign monarchical Hindu state."⁵³

Propaganda Mission:- After posing himself as the ruler of the only Hindu kingdom of the world, King Mahendra embarked upon the propaganda mission with a view to enhance his own glory and grandeur. In this connection, he took a lot of prominent writers of India like biographer Y.G.Krishnamurti, Professor Raj Nath Pandey, Narayan Chaturvedi and others into his confidence and made to eulogise the glory of Nepal and his family. Meanwhile, he also launched propaganda campaign within Nepal so that he could exploit both Hindu and Buddhist communities in his favour. As a result, a lot of propaganda books like *Nepal in Pictures*, *Culture and Monarchy* etc. were published. These books tried to portray the King not merely as the incarnation of Vishnu or Narayan but equally as the *Bodhisattwa* or the personage engaged in the pursuit of Buddhahood. In the words of the propaganda book *Nepal in Pictures*

"... the King.... is held in equal reverence by the Hindus and

⁵¹ Maitra Dev Pathak, *Adarsha Samrat Shri Panch Mahendra*, (Kathmandu: Maitra Dev Pathak, 2014 V.E.), p. 49

⁵² Narendra Goyal, *The King and His Constitution*, (New Delhi: Nepal Trading Corporation, 1959), p. 2

⁵³ *The Constitution of Nepal*, (Kathmandu: Law Books Management Committee, 1968), p. 2

Buddhists alike. To the Hindus he is the Man-god, the earthly incarnation of Vishnu... The Buddhists, however revere him as one of the Boddhisattwas or Buddhas-to-be. And during the periodic performance of Samyaka or All-is-One worship organised by the Buddhists the King is invited to attend in person to accept the devout offerings, which he does invariably, and there in the sacred dias he occupies a seat at the head of other deities represented by life-size metal casts. To the Hindus the King's palace is a shrine as sacred as that of Pashupatinath, the guardian deity of Nepal, while to the Buddhists it is a Vihara or a sacred convent. Thus when a pious man organises Vihara Puja his pilgrimage takes him to the Royal Palace where the King personally receives the traditional worship."⁵⁴

The other steps undertaken by King Mahendra towards this direction was to bring out the publication *Brihatpuras charyanava* and *Satkarmaratnavali*, the treatises on Tantra and Vedic rituals prepared by his forefathers Pratap Singh Shah and Girvan Yuddha Bikram Shah respectively. The former book was revised, enlarged and published by Dhana Shamsher J.B. Rana in 1968 while the latter one by Principal Ram Nath Acharya and Professor Damodar Koirala in 2026 V.E.. The King projected himself as the guardian of Tantra and Vedic tradition by publishing and distributing these books among the learned persons of Nepal.

Projecting Nepal as Leading Hindu Country:- After making all these arrangements, the King tried to exploit Hindu sentiments all over the world, specially in India, by projecting Nepal as the leading country of Hindus. For this purpose, he came into contact with M.S. Golwakar and his militant Hindu organisation known as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). As regards King Mahendra's attempt to declare Nepal as a Hindu kingdom, the words of Shaha are:-

"The attempt to exploit the ruler's ties with the Hindu religion for blatant political purposes is as recent as the post-1960 period of the late King Mahendra's rule. Before that Nepal, in pursuit of the declared goals of 1951 revolution, such as representative democracy and secularism, always emphasized officially the lack of discrimination in its tradition. The 1962 constitution of Nepal characterised Nepal as a Hindu state for the first time, even at the risk of incurring the displeasure of non Hindu minorities."⁵⁵

Moreover, the King tried to pose himself as the only world Hindu leader by attending the Hindu Cultural Rally organised at Nagpur, India by the militant Hindu organisation RSS on the sacred day of Makar Sankranti in 1965. Quoting the words of Nepal's Prime Minister Dr. Tulsī Giri, the *Hindustan Times* writes:- "It would have been the fulfilment of one of my

⁵⁴ Nepal..., f.n. No. 1,

⁵⁵ Rishikesh Shaha, *Nepali Politics: Retrospect and Prospect*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 214

dreams if the King had been able to visit Nagpur for I wanted to project him as a world leader of Hindus. He was the only King of the only Hindu Kingdom in the world who could lead the Hindus of the world."⁵⁶

The Indian government came to know the strategy of King Mahendra, the strategy which could threaten even the internal affairs of India, specially in its secular concept. In order to control this strategy of King Mahendra, the Indian Government pressurised King Mahendra to cancell his programme. Accordingly the programme was cancelled for which M.S. Golwalkar, Chief of the RSS, in a statement, blamed the Union Government of India for "bringing pressure on King Mahendra of Nepal to change his proposed visit to Nagpur."⁵⁷

However King Mahendra succeeded in projecting himself as the world Hindu leader by sending a fantastically beautiful message to this rally. And the words through which he implicitly posed himself as the world Hindu leader run as:-

"Destiny has conferred upon us the responsibility of living a humane life saturated with mutual help and affection and thus contributing to the creation of a healing atmosphere throughout the length and breadth of the world. Even today, we Hindus are best fitted to live such exemplary lives and make the ideal of world brotherhood a reality. Nepal, is therefore, proud of the fact that she has the fortune of presenting herself as a Hindu Kingdom. Nepal is conscious that Hindus all over the world feel joy and glory to find in Nepal an independent and sovereign Hindu Kingdom. This encourages Nepal to be ever effortful to remain a sanctuary for all Hindus even today."⁵⁸

King Mahendra continued this policy later on too. In order to exploit Hindu sentiments in foreign lands, specially in India, he again sent a delegation to First World Hindu Conference held at Allahabad "under the leadership of the Vice Chancellor of Tribhuvan University of Nepal."⁵⁹ In this conference, he asked the Hindus of all over the world to be united under one banner so as to strengthen themselves. The words of King Mahendra in this context are that "The Hindu scriptures have with authority said that for the present age 'strength lies in organisation'. It is, thus, equally necessary that Hindus all over the world should be united with cultural ties in keeping with the needs of the times."⁶⁰

While asking to unite in this way, he projected Nepal again as the

⁵⁶ *Hindustan Times*, (Delhi), January 28, 1965

⁵⁷ *Hindu*, (Madras), January 11, 1965

⁵⁸ H.M. King Mahendra, *Proclamations, Speeches and Messages (Vol.II)*, (Kathmandu: Department of Publicity, 1967), pp. 295-6

⁵⁹ H.M. King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Deva, *Proclamations, Speeches and Messages 1966*, (Kathmandu: Department of Information, 1969), p. 2

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2

sentinel and custodian of Hindu ethos and thus tried to give Nepal a leading role in the Hindu world. Giving impetus to Nepal, he emphasized again:-

"Everybody knows that there have been cultural relations between Nepal and India since ancient times and our country has always been a centre of learning and culture. At times when there had been onslaughts on culture in India, the learned Indian scholars sought asylum in Nepal. Our country has been the custodian of these gems of Indian culture which have been destroyed in India. Moreover it was in Nepal that some arts which were lost in India flourished."⁶¹

King Mahendra's mission of Hindu Nepal became fruitful outside the country to a large extent. But the country Nepal was not in a position to play a leading role in the Hindu world. Lack of Sanskrit education and unawareness regarding Hindu ethos among the people, even among the royal priests like *Badaguruju*, *Naib Badaguruju*, *Mulpurohit* etc., became a let or hindrance in this sphere. Hence the King made to enact a regulation regarding the appointment and code of conduct of these royal priests. With the enactment of this regulation, the royal priests were appointed on the basis of open competition rather than on hereditary basis. Thus it helped to break the tradition of selecting royal priests on heredity.

Similarly the King tried to encourage Sanskrit education in Nepal by setting up a Sanskrit University. Organising a conference of scholars and savants at Dang, he emphasized upon the necessity of Sanskrit education. At this conference, he also asked them to thrash out a solution as regards the opening of a Sanskrit University after proper deliberations. Addressing them in this way, the King uttered:-

"All of us Nepalese and specially Nepalese scholars realise the necessity of a Sanskrit University in our only Hindu country. I am happy that all of you learned people are assembled here today to deliberate on questions like how long it will take to open such a University, how it can be made to suit our country and how we can maintain the tradition of our scholarship in an up-to-date manner."⁶²

With the encouragement of King Mahendra, a Sanskrit University was opened at Dang district a few years afterwards. The untimely death of King Mahendra, a few years after the establishment of this university, hampered in this mission to a large extent.

King Birendra and His Religious Activities

Religious Outlook:- Birendra was a King well versed in the theory of *Tantra*. Unlike his father King Mahendra, he was trained in this sphere when he had been the crown prince of Nepal. Under the tutelage of General

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3

⁶² H.M. King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Deva, *Proclamations, Speeches and Messages 1968*, (Kathmandu: Department of Information, 1971), p. 11

Dhana Shamsher Rana, the well known Tantrik of Nepal, he had acquired abundant knowledge in regard to tantra and mysticism from the prominent books like *The Serpent Power*, *Shakti and Shakta* etc. written by Sir John Woodroffe alias Arthur Avalon and the others too. Although well acquainted with this tradition, he did not have so much inclination towards this line. So he did not cherish the tradition of tantra and mysticism so much unlike his father.

Despite such an outlook possessed by him, King Birendra did not demonstrate resentment towards the rituals and ceremonies as handed down by tradition and culture. He emphasized on the ethos of Hindu culture and projected himself as God despite his liberal education at the democratic environments of western world. In response to a question "How do you feel about being looked upon as God?", raised by a *Newsweek* correspondent, he uttered:- "I have responsibility (under Vedic scriptures) to protect the people against injustice. The concept of God is among the people."⁶³

Step against Bhakta Sthaneshwar:- As a King, Birendra was over-confident of his own capacity and calibre. The educational background in the western countries had encouraged him to become over-confident in this way. So he did not wish to contact and consult the mystics whom his father had once credited highly. On the otherhand, he wore negative outlook towards these mystics who came to open light during the period of his father. He did not have patience to look into the matter why his father had given prominence to such mystics. Moreover, he was one of the Kings whose ears could be poisoned by anyone and at any time.

At a certain development visit to Western Development Region, the King came into contact with some mischief-mongers. The mischief-mongers complained King Birendra that *Bhakta Sthaneshwar* had exploited the name of King Mahendra while constructing his own residential area known as Amarapuridham. Amarapuridham is a newly built religious site situated at Sidheshwar Village Development Committee in Palpa district. While complaining in this way, they also poisoned the ears of King Birendra with the words that *Bhakta Sthaneshwar* had misappropriated the government fund in connection with the construction of Amarapuridham. This report angered King Birendra and he immediately ordered to initiate stern action against the misappropriation. In the mean time, he also ordered the cows of the *dham* to be sent for auction. While ordering in this way, King Birendra did not consider on the advantages which his father had derived by utilising this mystic in the midst of subversive elements.

The Investigation Committee tried to trace out misappropriation of government fund at their best level but proved failure. Hence no action could be initiated against *Bhakta Sthaneshwar*. The result was that the order was

⁶³ Rishikesh Shaha, *Three Decades and Two Kings (1960-1990): Eclipse of Nepal's Partyless Monarchic Rule*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1990), p. 9

cancelled and the cows of the *dharm* were refunded as before.⁶⁴ In the words of Tulasi Ram Pandey, a former district level *pancha* of Syanja district

"The construction of the Amarapuridham was initiated in the year 2022 V.E. and got completed on 2029 V.E.. This was a newly developed religious site consisting of two temples--Singhabahini Bhagawati and Radhakrishna--,one Havan Kunda for sacrificial fire, one Chardham Pokhari (Holy Water Tank), one Sanskrit High School, one Student Hostel, one Regional Health Post and one Postal Unit."

Mystical Circle at Palace:- In spite of his negative outlook towards mysticism, King Birendra had arranged a mystical group of three persons at the royal palace. This group, affiliated with the King's Principal Secretariat, was headed by Lt. General Dhana Shamsher Rana. The two other mystics were Dharmananda Vajracharya and Shaktinandan Rajopadhaya, the residents respectively of Kathmandu and Lalitpur. Among them, Vajracharya was a Buddhist Tantrik while Rajopadhaya a Hindu Tantrik. During King Birendra's time, these Tantriks used to give advice on the *pooja* performance and other activities of the Guthi Samsthan, a government corporation directly affiliated with Principal Secretariat. It is said that Dharmananda Vajracharya was once sent to utilise Tantric cure to Kumari, the living goddess of Kathmandu. Goddess Kumari was getting seriously ill at that time. Vajracharya went to Goddess Kumari and tried to cure her disease by adopting the method of exorcism. This made Goddess Kumari okay. But the negative impact was that Vajracharya felt very much ill immediately after the treatment. After returning home, he could not move his head to and fro. He died a few days afterwards. Within about a year, his wife and eldest son too seemed to leave their mortal coils.

Development of Religious Sites:- Like his father King Mahendra, Birendra also was a King inclined to develop religious and cultural sites of the country. So he undertook diverse programmes to carry on development works in these sites. The methods and means which the King adopted was quite different from that of his father. In this connection, King Birendra did not rely upon a trusted man of his own unlike his father. He formed committees and trusts so that the development programmes could be launched in a planned way and on phasewise basis. The result was the setting up of committes like Pashupati Development Trust, Lumbini Development Trust, Kathmandu Valley Cultural and Religious Sites Development Coordination Committee etc.. The King or the royal family members personally supervised these committees and gave instructions and directions for carrying on programmes effectively. Moreover, he made some of the important sites of the country like the Swyambhoonath Area, the Pashupatinath Area, Changu Narayan Area etc. to be incorporated in the World Heritage List of UNESCO so that the

⁶⁴ Former District Pancha Tulasi Ram Pandey had Related these facts to the author in an interview with him.

development programmes could be carried on in a massive scale.

The supervision and direction of King Birendra resulted grand success on some of the areas like Dakhsinkali while the large projects like Pashupati Development Trust, Lumbini Development Trust etc. proved most controversial. The development of Dakshinkali Area got grand success only because of the affiliation of expert, sincere and experienced administrators and engineers. On the otherhand, the other projects-- Pashupati Development Trust and Lumbini Development Trust-- brought unwanted repercussion to the palace because of their failure and also because of the involvement of royal family members. As regards the success story of development works at Dakshinkali area, the words of Purna Kadaria, Project Chief of Kathmandu Valley Cultural and Religious Sites Development Project, are:-

"The Dakshinkali area, today, has developed itself into a self-sufficient institution--an institution capable of standing on its own feet. The services and co-operation rendered by Sanu Bhai Dangol, Joint Secretary deployed from royal palace service, and Shyam Sundar Sharma, Project Chief of Slide Victims Area Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Project, towards making this area a self-sustaining unit by developing it from multi-dimensional outlook can never be minimised. Dangol had rendered his service and co-operation in this area as Chairman of Dakhsinkali Area Management Committee and Member Secretary of Kathmandu Valley Cultural and Religious Sites Development Coordination Committee while Sharma as Project Chief of Kathmandu Valley Cultural and Religious Sites Development Project. Therefore credit goes to Dangol, Sharma and all the staff engaged in this project including the local inhabitants for carrying out such laudable development activities in Dakhsinkali area as is found today."⁶⁵

Missing of Opportunity:- Birendra was one of the Kings who generally missed opportunity to enhance his own glory and prestige. He missed such an opportunity time and again because of his negligence and misleading nature. In the year 1986, he got an opportunity to enhance his own prestige and glory by participating as the chief guest of the fifteenth World Buddhist Conference organised in Nepal. In order to organise this conference, more than three million Nepali rupees had been allocated by HMG as commanded by the King. The Dharmodaya Sabha, its organiser, had submitted a petition to King Birendra requesting him to grace the occasion by inaugurating the programme.

In the beginning, the King gave words to Dharmodaya Sabha, through Principal Private Secretary Narayan Prasad Shrestha, that he would be there to inaugurate the programme. Later on, the response became negative. The Dharmodaya Sabha had have to await for a long period even for this

negative response. The Sabha could not dispatch its invitation cards to foreign dignitaries because of the delay in response. In a letter of 25th Asar, 2043 V.E. written to Yadav Kant Silwal, Member Secretary to Lumbini Development Trust, the Sabha relates its problem because of the delay in response and writes:-

It has already become clear from all quarters (levels) that the fifteenth World Buddhist Conference would be organised on the month November of 1986. As regards the fixing of date (of conference), we are awaiting for the day convenient to His Majesty. As we have not been able to get any date confirmed by His Majesty, we could not dispatch invitation cards officially to all centres and distinguished persons of Nepal. In accordance with the regulation of the association, the invitation was to be dispatched by the host country six months earlier, to say in other words, for organising conference on November, the invitation was to be sent on the month of May. The months of May and June, including the ten days of July, have passed. But we have not been able to send invitation cards up till now. This has caused us to feel difficult and uneasy. (See appendix)

On 17th November, 1986, Prince Gyanendra graced the occasion by inaugurating the conference. This made King Birendra to alienate from the Buddhist people of Nepal, who constitute more than fifty percent of the total population. Moreover he missed the opportunity to be venerated by hosts of foreign guests who represented distinguished members of delegations. Had the king been there to inaugurate the conference, the very presence of him would have evoked Buddhist sentiments towards the palace from all quarters of the world. But he could not utilise this moment for his own personal ends.⁶⁶

Religious Sites under Royalties' Supervision:- During King Birendra's time, the royal family members also seem to involve in the development activities of religious sites. Queen Aishwarya involved herself with the development of Pashupati area by assuming the position of Chairperson of Pashupati Development Trust. Similarly Prince Gyanendra also undertook the task of developing Lumbini area for a certain period as the chairman of Lumbini Development Trust. The involvement of royal family members in these areas, in fact, helped to raise the status of these trusts. Under their supervision, grand master plans were prepared and funds too were raised in order to carry on these plans smoothly. The master plans were prepared on such way that if they were to be carried on effectively, the people of these areas, specially of the Pashupati area, would have to be removed somewhere else for resettlement. The grand master plan of Pashupati area was prepared with a view to extend the Pashupati area and the programme of

⁶⁶ *Bhikkshu* Amritananda, late president of Dharmodaya Sabha, had once relayed to the author how the Sabha had been assured by Narayan Prasad Shrestha that King Birendra would be there to inaugurate the conference. He was also of the opinion that the King had missed the opportunity to enhance his own glory and grandeur by not participating [inaugurating] the conference.

acquiring public land and houses (the people's land and houses) in this area created hue and cry among the local people. But the official staff under the royal family members were in no mood to listen this hue and cry. They were simply on the errand to please the royal family members so that they might be able to accomplish their own selfish ends. The unlistening nature of the staff resulted in the failure of the Trust's mission. The Pashupati area, particularly its holy Baagmati river, although being supervised by the Queen became very much polluted. Even for washing the Pashupatinath image, the water of Baagmati could not be utilised. The then chief priest, Padma Nabha Adiga, was compelled to arrange a separate new well and the water of this new well was utilised for washing the temple images. As regards the polluted atmosphere of Baagmati river, the words of Pokharel are:-

"The water of Baagmati, which the Hindus sprinkle in their bodies as a purificatory measure, has become untouchable because of the pollution. The innumerable gutters (sewage) enjoined to the Baagmati river have been the cause of this pollution. Despite the expenditure of twenty million rupees, nothing has happened in the controlling of river pollution. A few days back, the Research Laboratory for Agriculture, Biotechnology and Institute of Environmental Science examined the water of Baagmati and concluded that the water is unuseable from every view-points. The researchers have clarified that the water of Baagmati is filled up with a poisonous element known as cadmium. According to the health experts, the use of this water may affect sensitive organs of human body like heart, liver, kidney and cause convulsion, epilepsy etc..⁶⁷

The re-establishment of democracy in 1990 brought a sudden change in the position of the palace and the royal family members. Prince Gyanendra was made to quit the Lumbini Development Trust. Although Queen Aishwarya remained intact in Pashupati Development Trust, she was unable to impose her whims as before. This made to bring change in the master plan of the Pashupati area. The Pashupati Development Trust was not in a position to acquire land for the extension of Pashupati area as it had planned before. This made the people domiciled at Pashupati area to feel a kind of relief. Taking note of this relief, Sangraula in an article comments:-

"The unfortunate people domiciled at Pashupati area have not forgotten the tragic story that their shelter and hope under Lord Pashupatinath's area were about to be abducted (under acquisition) by the Queen's grace. The tears (of the people) that flowed at Pashupati area before the nose of the Lord might perhaps be as much as the water flown in Baagmati river at that time. When the people's movement made the grandeur of the Queen to be shattered, only then, the people, victimised by the lord, got opportunity to breath

67 Govinda Pokharel, "Pradooshit Baagmati: Ghatdo Dharmik Astha", *Dristi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), August 10, 1994

freely."⁶⁸

The other aspect of the story has been that the staff of Pashupati Development Trust exploited the name of the royal family in order to serve their own selfish ends. As a result, some of the important archaeological pieces of Pashupati area were made to be lifted by replacing the new ones. And, in this way, the involvement of royal family members in the development of religious sites made to erode their position in the eyes of the people. As regards the lifting of archaeological pieces at Pashupati area, Lamichhane reports:-

"During the bygone years, a cleanliness campaign was launched in Pashupati area, under the supervision of R.D. Teli Shah of Casino, by spending 4.8 million rupees. On the pretext of cleanliness campaign, the idols of the gods and goddesses and other important archaeological pieces were made to be changed."⁶⁹

Forewarning, Negligence and Result:- One of the prominent mystics of King Birendra's time was Padma Nabha Adiga, Chief Priest of the Pashupatinath temple. A brahmin from Southern India, Adiga was affiliated with the Pashupatinath temple for more than three decades. During his tour of duty at this temple, Adiga emerged out to be one of the prominent mystics of Nepal. The Indian people, specially the Marwaris who came to visit the Pashupatinath temple, were impressed much by his *pooja* performance and also by his forecasting power. This made the Marwaris of India, the Marwaris domiciled in Nepal too, to flock to the residence of this chief priest. Being pleased with his advice and forecasting, they offered huge amount of money to him and in this way he became one of the richest persons of Nepal.

Adiga was beholden to Lord Pashupatinath and to the Nepalese people, particularly to the palace, for this opportunity to earn money under their patronage. The money which he earned in this way, to say in his own version, was abundant enough for supporting ten generations of his posterity.

In the year 1980, Chief Priest Adiga asked King Birendra to grant him retirement from his job. While being asked, he reported that Lord Pashupatinath had made him unable even to enter into the sanctum of the temple for *pooja* purpose. According to him, Lord Pashupatinath seemed to get angry with Pashupati Area Reform and Development Committee because of its plan to replace the silver frames of the temple-doors by artistic wooden frames. He also warned through Principal Secretariat that if the King did not take notice of this fact at once, the palace would have to suffer from some kind of political set-back. As forewarned by Chief Priest Adiga, the year 1980 proved a year of annoyance for the palace. King Birendra was compelled to declare referendum even for retaining the then political system in Nepal. This

⁶⁸ Khagendra Sangraula "Gaand Korakor Ra Bhandaphor", *Pristhabhumi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 18, 1991

⁶⁹ Man Mohan Lamichhane "Nepalma Mafiako BaddhoByapar," *Nepal Jagaran Weekly*, (Kathmandu), April 17, 1995

made the King to recollect Chief Priest Adiga's words and he arranged the chief priest to pacify Lord Pashupatinath by offering a special *pooja*. Later on, the palace reconstituted the existing committee under the chairmanship of Ramesh Jang Thapa, the then Director General of HMG's Department of Archaeology.

In the year 1990 too, the chief priest forewarned that a severe political crisis was in the offing. According to him, it would be such a crisis which, if due attention is not paid, might sweep away even the existence of the palace. In order to save the palace from such crisis, he arranged the programme of *Rudra Maha Yagna* within the courtyard of the Pashupatinath temple. For this *yagna*, he allocated money from his own packet. King Birendra, at that time, was at Pokhara in connection with his development visit to Western Development Region. Chief Priest Adiga requested through me (this author) the presence of King Birendra in the *yagna* for performing the *sankalpa* or initiation task. The present author at that time was the person who, as a Joint Secretary, was handling the desk of the Pashupatinath temple also. So the author reported this message to the Royal Tour Camp at Pokhara. The response to this message was that 'let Chief Priest Adiga perform the initiation ceremony by himself. Let him send the *prasad* of the *yagna* at Pokhara after its completion.'

Chief Priest Adiga was astonished to learn of this news. He again asked the author to convey his message to King Birendra. And the message ran as:-

'Within near future Nepal would be landing into a serious political situation. It would be such a situation which might perhaps sweep away the existence of the palace of Nepal. I have been here for more than three decades. During this period, I have had the opportunity to make abundant money, abundant enough even to carry on the lives of my ten future generations happily. Hence I am obliged to Nepal, its King and the people for affording me this opportunity. And I want to repay the debts by arranging this *yagna* with my own personal expenditure. If His Majesty does not wish to attend the initiation ceremony, let it remain so. But it is my forewarning that the palace might have to lose its existence because of this very reason.'

This author communicated the synopsis of this message to the Royal Tour Camp. Queen Aishwarya hastened to the Pashupatinath temple on the Maha Shivaratri day of 1990 to pay homage to Lord Pashupatinath. At this time, she also performed *sankalpa* (initiation) of the *Rudra Maha Yagna*. Later on, the author relayed to Chief Priest Adiga how 'I had done my best. In spite of my sincere efforts, I could not arrange His Majesty to grace the occasion. However, my efforts have brought results. Her Majesty had been there to perform initiation task.'

The reply of Chief Priest Adiga in this regard was puzzling and to a large extent, shocking too. In response to these words, Chief Priest Adiga told that

'I thank you, Dangolji, for your sincere efforts in communicating my words to His Majesty. Her Majesty Aishwarya has really graced the initiation ceremony because of your sincere efforts. However, I have had to say a few more words. Her Majesty's presence for initiation works has saved half of the Shah dynasty's position because she represents the better-half (*ardhangini*) of His Majesty according to the Hindu tradition. If His Majesty had graced the occasion, things would have been otherwise. All the position of the palace would have remained intact even after the coming crisis. Dangolji, I ask you to go on seeing whether my words would come true or not?'

A few days afterwards, King Birendra returned to Kathmandu from his visit to Western Development Region. At this time, the political scenerio of Nepal had turned from bad to worse. Everywhere in the capital, there was the uproar against the palace and the Panchayat System. King Birendra could not withstand the situation. He was constrained to dismantle the Panchayat System and also to install Parliamentary Democracy based on multi-party system. And, in this way, the palace lost half of its position as had been forewarned by Padma Nabha Adiga, the then chief priest of the Pashupatinath temple.



Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

The dissolution of Panchayat System dragged the palace at the new cross-road of Nepalese politics. It was such a cross-road from where the palace was not authorised to turn back. As an initial step towards the front move, the palace was compelled to form an interim government. That step was initiated by King Birendra on 19th April, 1990 by announcing a government under Krishna Prasad Bhattarai's prime ministership. The other steps which the King was constrained to initiate were the dissolution of Village and Town Panchayats and the dismissal of Zonal Commissioners. The King completed these tasks on 7th May, 1990. In this way, the entire structure of the old political system was dismantled while the new political system was yet to be developed.

Palace at Crossroads

The new situation created a power vacuum in the country bringing about confusion and chaos. Taking the opportunity in hand, the pro-panchayat elements raised their heads and began to perpetrate violence implicitly. The Nepalese people were already aware of the fact. So they formed vigilante groups and countered the moves of the pro-panchayat elements. Later on, the government brought the situation under control by imposing curfew and undertaking other measures too. As regards the formation of vigilante groups, the words of Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai were:-

"The regressive and reactionary forces who enjoyed power over the past thirty years were attempting to raise their heads. Such elements are becoming active in a manner similar to that of the Khukuri Dal who perpetrated organised violence and vandalism after the revolution of 2007 B.S.. It is a matter of happiness that the people themselves are aware of such elements and have moved to form vigilante groups at different localities to help the government."

Mrs. Sahana Pradhan, the president of United Left Front, expressing similar words, thanked "the neighbourhood security committees formed to safeguard the achievements of the movement which have helped to frustrate

the plots of reactionary elements and expose them before the people."² Man Mohan Adhikari, Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN), on the otherhand, issued a stern statement against the King warning him that "...he should not even think of trying to revoke parliamentary democracy. If he did so, he would land Nepal in great turmoil with unknown consequences."³

Look-out for Restoring Power

Even after the dismantlation of Panchayat System, the palace was not in a disappointed position. The military, police and administration of the country still being under its control, the palace was on the look-out to restore its lost position. King Birendra tried to revive his lost authority by staging various plans and programmes. As a first step towards this direction, he tried to experiment divide and rule policy between the Nepali Congress and United Left Front (ULF), an alliance of different communist groups still holding power in the cabinet.

Immediately after the split in the ULF, the King elusively suggested the Prime Minister of interim government, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, to kick Communists out on their backs because four parties out of seven had gone out of the alliance. Prime Minister Bhattarai was aware of King Birendra's strategy. Hence he responded very curtly "You are a clever fellow. I know you also want to kick me out."⁴

As the King found himself failure in his 'divide and rule' policy, he tried to experiment another strategy. This he did on 11th May, 1990 by announcing a Constitution Reforms Recommendation Commission over Radio Nepal. The King did not consult the interim government while announcing the commission. Even though the commission had incorporated in it the liberal members of the Nepali Congress and the CPN like Daman Nath Dhungana and Bharat Mohan Adhikari, the announcement could not evoke public sympathy towards the palace. This was an attempt which a constitutional monarch was not supposed to do. That is why, the step of the King caused consternation. To add to it, the cause of democratic leaders' irritation was that the King had set up a commission only to reform the old constitution in lieu of drafting a new one. At that time all the palace secretariat staff had the ardent desire to continue on intervening in the politics of the country as in the Panchayat period. They were in search of one or the other pretext to exercise undue power as usual.

Immediately after the announcement, reactions began to circulate in the country. On the very day of announcement, the Nepali Congress and the Communists issued official condemnations against the King. The other day,

² *The Rising Nepal*, (Kathmandu), April 27, 1990

³ Rishikesh Shaha, *Politics in Nepal 1980-1991: Referendum, Stalemate and Triumph of People Power*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 1993), p. 222

⁴ William Raeper and Martin Hoftun, *Spring Awakening: An Account of the 1990 Revolution in Nepal*, (New Delhi: Viking Penguin Books India (P) Ltd., 1992), p. 184

they asked their own members --Daman Nath Dhungana and Bharat Mohan Adhikari--to resign from the King's commission which they complied with immediately. Three days afterwards, the head of the Commission, former Judge Vishwa Nath Upadhyaya, too resigned. That made the King officially to disband the commission on May 15, 1990.

The condemnatory note which Girija Prasad Koirala, Secretary General to the Nepali Congress, used in regard to the announcement of this Constitution Reforms Recommendation Commission was that "Some of the members of the commission were undesirable and that the people wanted not a reformed constitution but a new separate constitution."⁵ These reactions made Prime Minister Bhattarai to go to the King and meet him on 13th May. He resorted to threats that he would be resigning from the cabinet if the King didn't remove certain unnecessary persons from the constitution making body.

Despite learning such lessons, the King's loyalty towards the new democratic regime remained ambiguous. Without taking note of the changing situation, the King again appointed a new Attorney General and two new Commissioners of the Electoral Commission on the recommendation of the old Raj Sabha or Council of State. The appointments were condemned vehemently from different quarters of the nation. The most severe criticism came from Marxist-Leninists. They accused the King of trying to regain power by actively working against the principles of constitutional monarchy. These communists also recounted how the King had appointed former *panchas* to government posts without consulting the cabinet.

In an interview, Prime Minister Bhattarai also made a comment which runs:-

"The king cannot be tied with a scrap of paper, for he had a 35,000 man army and the police behind him. Blood will be shed if we try to do so in the present situation. We can tie the king only by framing a constitution and holding elections immediately after. We would also try to change the King's heart by reminding him of the factors that have now compelled him to hand over power to people."⁶

Apprehension of Mischief

The conspirational activities undertaken by the palace in this way made the Nepalese people to look at the palace with suspicious mind. So they began to apprehend each and every event connected with the palace as some sort of royal intrigue. The attack against Queen Aishwarya on August 23, 1990 also did not remain as an exception in that context. On August 23, Queen Aiswarya, accompanied by other royal family members, had visited the

⁵ Narayan Khadka, "Democracy and Development in Nepal: Prospects and Challenges", *The Pacific Affairs* Vol.66, No.1, (Canada: University of British Columbia, Spring 1993), p. 5

⁶ Raeper and Hofstun, f.n. No. 4, pp. 185-186

Pashupatinath temple to observe *Teej* festival. While on the way, they were attacked by some persons. The official version was that the "disruptive elements threw stones at the vehicles of the military police and traffic police smashing their glasses. Some rounds were fired in the air to bring the situation under control."⁷

The event made almost all the political parties to feel shocked. So they condemned the act of the extremists for several days. Although they condemned the act, they also apprehended that there might be some mischief to revoke the lost power. It was because of the reason they took this attempt as a calculated programme "to muddy the image of the democratic system restored in the country. (and expressed) ...this conspiracy is an attempt to obstruct the road to democratic development by undermining the entire process of framing the forthcoming constitution and holding general election."⁸ After all, the Queen was involved in an incident which demonstrated that the interim government had lost control in the maintenance of law and order.

Pointing out the flaws in that event, Mathura Prasad Shrestha, the then Health Minister, commented:-

"There were lots of flaws when the incident happened. First of all the queen should have gone to the Pashupati temple rather than to the Guheshwari. She went to Guheshwari temple and she took her adult son with her. No woman is supposed to take an adult son with them on this occasion. This in itself was funny. And nobody knew that she would take that road. Nobody could know this. It was impossible. When she arrived, the song programme and meeting was already over. In the main area where the people used to concentrate--from that area to where the incident occurred--takes about ten to fifteen minutes walk. How could the demonstrators know that she was going that way? Another funny thing is that her car stopped in the middle of the road. The car was in perfect condition --why should it stop like this? Another strange thing was that they hijacked a police car and the car's windows were broken from the inside rather than from the outside. And after all this the queen rather than going to the palace went to Prince Gyanendra's house. Why should she go there? Everybody knows or suspects that Gyanendra is leading the mafia gang which is trying to turn the situation backward."⁹

Strategy to Retain Authority in New Constitution

Despite so many failures, the palace was again on the look-out to retain its authority as before. So it tried to put a pressure on the Constitution

⁷ The Rising Nepal (Kathmandu), August 24, 1990.

⁸ Ibid,

⁹ quoted in Raepet and Hofman, f.n. No. 04, p. 187

Recommendations Commission and the prime minister of interim government for retaining such an authority. But the palace did not succeed in that mission because of the adamant nature of both the Nepali Congress and the communist groups.

Among the three groups that represented in the Constitution Recommendations Commission were the groups of the Nepali Congress, the Communists and the palace. The reason behind it was that the political movement of 1990 had been concluded after a compromise reached between these three forces. The main issue raised in the commission was whether the palace is to function as the office of a constitutional head or as of an active and absolute monarch. The staff of the PS who were used to or had the taste of active intervention in the politics and general administration were not in a mood to give up their active role. All these three groups were in conflict because of their own stands. Among the three groups, the group of the Nepali Congress wanted to limit the powers of the King and secure multi-party democracy. It was guided by the spirit that the King should remain in office simply as a symbolic figurehead but without any political power.

The group of the Communists wanted that there should be a clear break with the past. In that connection, some of them were of the opinion that the new constitution should be utilised simply as a temporary measure for securing dictatorship of the proletariat. In that way, it was the Communist groups that gave much more pressure against the palace. The words expressed by Nirmal Lama, the leader of Nepal Communist Party (Fourth Convention) and member of Constitution Recommendation Commission, in this context, are:-

"Monarchy is a term which does not occupy any place in the dictionary of our party. But it is a fact that the people want to maintain a constitutional monarch. The Nepal Communist Party (Fourth Convention), therefore, wishes to bind the King with the constitution but for the time being only. It wants to throw it away later on."¹⁰

The representatives of the palace were on the errand that they might succeed in retaining the palace authority as much as possible. In the Constitution Recommendations Commission, there was hardly anyone to listen to the voice of the palace group so attentively. Their voice appeared in the commission as a pleading for the lost cause. That made the palace to worry as regards its position. So it tried to influence implicitly the cabinet as well as the Constitution Recommendations Commission for pleading in its favour. The Royal Army was also mobilised to plead for that purpose. When the army did not succeed in this mission, the King himself tried for such a move. In regard to the mobilisation of the Royal Army, the *Saptahik Vimarsha* quotes:-

"The Military Operation and Staff Duties Unit (of the general branch of the Royal Army Headquarter) issued a circular, No. 1103/46/179, to all Royal Army Units on Asar 9, 2047 V.E.. The Circular directed them to submit following suggestions to the Constitution Recommendations Commission: 'His Majesty be made the supreme Commander-in-Chief and Field Marshal of Royal Nepalese Army. Sovereignty be vested in His Majesty along with the power to control the army. The post of Commander-in-Chief be given a constitutional status as before and he be appointed only by His Majesty.'"¹¹

Similarly Raeper and Hoftun quotes the words of Prime Minister Bhattarai in this context and write:-

"... one day I had a telephone call in the office. Some generals and the Commander-in-Chief wanted to see me personally. All of them came --22 generals in uniform led by the Commander-in-Chief. They saluted and sat down. I gave them a cup of tea--each. They gave me a file which was the same thing again. Prerogatives and private purse and all that should remain not with the people, but with the King. I replied that political changes were the result of a very big movement. How do you suppose that I can do these things or get these things accepted by the people?.....Then the King called me one day suddenly.... the King said he didn't agree what the Commission was doing. I said it was beyond my power to change anything. I could not get it accepted by the Commission or by the Cabinet. There were all kinds of people involved in this, I said, Communists and others -- and they would become very angry."¹²

A peep into above mentioned facts reveals how the Chief of the Army Staff also had given pressure to bring the new constitution in favour of the palace. In reality, the Chief of the Army Staff did not have right to do so. He did not realise at that time that the army was maintained by the tax paid by the citizens and not by the personal purse of the King.

Taking note of these undue moves, the *Samalochana* warns the palace:

"The constitutional monarch of Nepal is trying to prove that not blood but power runs through his veins. The King, who had become a constitutional monarch on April 9, 1990, has to understand that history has ordained only two courses for the monarchy of present world. It has either to accept the sovereignty of the people or to flee like the Shah of Iran."¹³

On 10th September, 1990, Judge Viswa Nath Upadhaya submitted

11 *Saptahik Vimarsha*, (Kathmandu), July 6, 1990

12 Raeper and Hoftun, f.n. No. 4 pp. 193-194

13 *Samalochana Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 27, 1990

the draft constitution to King Birendra which the King handed over to Prime Minister Bhattarai. After holding serious discussions and making technical reforms, the cabinet of Bhattarai finalised the draft and submitted it to the King on 11th October, 1990. The palace tried to delay in announcing the new constitution with a view to make certain alterations. In that connection, the Principal Press Secretariat announced on 15th October that the promulgation date of the new constitution was put off until after the *Deepavali* holidays.

This information was enough for the leaders of both the Nepali Congress and the United Left Front. They apprehended the delay in the promulgation of the constitution as a conspiracy of the palace to deprive the people of the gains of the pro-democracy movement. Hence they called meetings and issued press statements to alert the people against the live threat to democracy. That made the palace to release the draft constitution on 21st October. Although it was said to have been prepared in consultation with the prime minister, the draft was fundamentally different from the one finalised by the interim government. The leftist members of the Constitution Recommendations Commission were irritated by this new draft. They went to the prime minister and asked clarification. The clarification of the prime minister in this context was that

"On 20th October, I sent for His Majesty's Principal Secretary, Revati Raman Khanal, and told him that I was unable to have the new text endorsed by the Council of Ministers or the Nepali Congress. Therefore the question of the Nepali people accepting it did not arise too. I too cannot accept it because of my political stand and morality. I, therefore, request you to convey my resignation to His Majesty."¹⁴

Pointing out the palace strategy on the release of the draft constitution, Khadka writes similarly:-

"The second event was the release of a draft constitution on October 21, 1990 which claimed to have been prepared in consultation with the Prime Minister. Mr. Bhattarai denied that the royal palace draft had been prepared in consultation with him. The king's counter draft of the constitution, if transpired, would have left his executive, legislative and judicial powers intact, as under the Panchayat system. The draft empowered the king to dismiss the prime minister, dissolve the House of Representatives under emergency power and appoint a new one. It deleted all references to the historic democracy movement contained in the draft prepared by the Constitution Commission and endorsed by the (interim) cabinet."¹⁵

Actually the palace, in the changed context, did not have any right to frame the constitution. It was making every effort to grasp an opportunity to

¹⁴ *Gorkhapatra*, (Kathmandu), October 22, 1990

¹⁵ Khadka, f.n. No. 5, p. 59

revive its prerogatives as before. The steps of the palace, specially the new draft of the constitution, provoked hostile reactions in the press as well as in the public. The pressmen began to pour harsh words towards the palace for perpetrating such actions. To quote the *Saptahik Nepali Awaj* "the royal palace is trying to impose an undemocratic as well as reactionary constitution on the people...the reactionary elements in the royal palace are instigating the King to withdraw from his pledge to become a constitutional monarch."¹⁶

The words of *Jana Sambad* in this context are that "the royal palace has fallen under the influence of a handful reactionary elements. It has failed to understand the true aspirations of the people....in case such manipulation continues, the 200 years old royal tradition is sure to disappear from Nepal once for all times."¹⁷

Not being satisfied with the new draft, the political parties and professional solidarity groups began to raise voice in a similar manner. They also organised open air protests. The result was that protest meetings and processions became the order of the day once again in the Kathmandu Valley as in the first week of April 1990. Amidst such pressures, the interim government proposed the final draft of the new constitution incorporating some of the features of the draft released by the palace. Prime Minister Bhattarai submitted it to King Birendra which he announced on 9th November, 1990. And this announcement ended the "long power struggle. In the final rounds between Prime Minister Bhattarai and the King, the Prime Minister had won. Popular power had at last triumphed over traditional power in Nepal."¹⁸

Gift Constitution

The constitution announced by King Birendra on 9th November, 1990 was also a gift constitution like all other former constitutions of Nepal. Although King Tribhuvan, the grand father of King Birendra, had declared on 18th February, 1951 that "his people should thenceforth be governed according to the provisions of Democratic Constitution framed by a Constituent Assembly elected by them"¹⁹, these words of King Tribhuvan were never translated into action. And the result was that the Nepalese people had have to suffer from some sort of tyranny for so many years. Even while framing the present constitution, *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 2047(1990)*, no attempt was made for electing the Constituent Assembly. In the words of Misra

"Even now in 1990, we could not have the legitimizing authority to

¹⁶ *Saptahik Vimarsha*, (Kathmandu), October 26, 1990

¹⁷ *Jana Sambad Weekly*, (Kathmandu), October 24, 1990

¹⁸ Raeper and Hofstun, f.n. No. 04, p. 197

¹⁹ Narendra Goyal, *The King and His Constitution*, (New Delhi: Nepal Trading Corporation, 1959), p. 103

the constituent assembly elected by the people; instead, the king on a compromise basis appointed a Drafting Commission and when the Commission submitted its draft, the palace came up with its own draft; but when the people protested, the king promulgated the commission's draft with whatever changes the palace thought fit to insert into the constitution."²⁰

In that way, the 1990 Constitution too appeared simply as a gift awarded by the palace to the people. To quote Shaha "As to the question of popular legitimacy of the Constitution, the fact remains that it was not drawn by elected representatives of the people, nor by constituent assembly. The 1990 Constitution is also, technically speaking, a gift of the king to the people."²¹ Despite such commentaries, there is much difference in the nature of the present constitution because it was an outcome of the deliberation among the three contracting potential forces of Nepal. And it contradicted to the nature of previous ones which were being framed at the will of the king. To conclude, the process of framing the present constitution may be taken as a middle course between a pure gift of the King as the previous ones or as the constitution framed by the elected Constituent Assembly of India.

Fruit of People's Victory

The 1990 Constitution occupies a very significant place among all the constitutions of Nepal. The Nepalese history traces it as the first constitution brought forth by the victory of people's movement. Hence, unlike all other former constitutions, this constitution, in its preamble, specifically mentions certain words as the landmark of people's victory, and the words are: "...in keeping with the desire of the Nepalese people expressed through the recent movement to bring about constitutional changes ... I ... do hereby promulgate and enforce this Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal."²²

People as Sovereign Authority

As the 1990 Constitution had been a fruit of the Nepalese people's movement, it was but natural that this constitution, unlike all the previous ones assigned sovereignty or sovereign authority of the nation to the Nepalese people by transforming absolute monarchy into constitutional monarchy. And this was the most significant feature of this constitution. The preamble of this constitution clearly mentions in this context that "Whereas, We are convinced that the source of sovereign authority to the independent and sovereign Nepal is inherent in the people I do hereby promulgate and enforce

²⁰ Pramod Kumar Misra, "Politics of Ideologies in Nepal's Recent History", *Economic and Political Monthly* Vol. XI, No. 1, (Kathmandu: May 1993). p. 1

²¹ Shaha, f.n. No. 3, p. 238

²² *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 2047 (1990)*, (Kathmandu: Law Books Management Board, 1992), p. 2

this Constitution..."²³ Taking note of this feature in the constitution, Raeper and Hoftun write:-

"The new constitution was certainly democratic in a way the previous Panchayat constitution had never been. Sovereignty now rests with the people and the King had become a constitutional monarch. After so many years as an absolute ruler, King Birendra was now a national figurehead."²⁴

Comparison with Previous Constitution

The other features of this constitution were multi-party democracy and bicameralism. The constitution of the former political system known as Panchayat System had outlawed the political parties. Although there had been an unicameral legislature known as the Rastriya Panchayat, no opposition group, in a formal way, existed in that system. The prime minister and other ministers were nominated from among the members of the legislature but the legislature had no hand in the selection of them. It was the palace which decided all these matters. The prime minister and the ministers would remain in office only at the pleasure and mercy of the palace. They had to resign from office as and when the palace would instruct them to do so. Elaborating on the insignificant role of the National Panchayat as a legislative body, Joshi and Rose write very clearly:-

"It is the King who appoints the Ministers, however, and nothing in the Constitution obligates him to select persons who have the confidence of the Legislature or to consult with it in making appointments. Nor is the King's choice effectively circumscribed by the provision that Ministers must be members of the National Panchayat, in view of his power to appoint certain percentage of the membership of that institution. Obviously, if the King want someone on the Council of Ministers it would be relatively easy to arrange membership in the National Panchayat for him within the prescribed six-month period. The National Panchayat can also exercise only limited forms of control over a Minister once he had been appointed. No confidence votes supported by two third of the membership of the National Panchayat present and voting may affect the tenure of a Minister, but would not necessarily lead to his dismissal. The final decision in such a situation is vested in the King, who can retain any Minister if he should so desire. Thus, the system incorporated in 1962 Constitution represents a significant modification of the principle of ministerial responsibility, for a Minister can be dismissed or retained by the King without reference

²³ *Ibid*, p. 2

²⁴ Raeper and Hoftun, f.n. No. 4, p. 198

to the support he may enjoy in the National Panchayat."²⁵

And similarly tracing a picture of the palace strategy in removing the prime ministers in those days, the *Yugsambad* under the title "Gaijatre Hero Giri..ja" comments:-

"In the Panchayat period, there was no need to arrange Nepal bandh or Chakka Jam for removing the prime minister. When personalities like Surya Bahadur Thapa would forget the foothold of their power or when they, like Girija Babu, would begin to dance like monkey, at that time, the prime minister makers would ask certain journalists to write against the prime minister. When the newspapers, like Jumlis, starts vituperative attack on the prime minister on some of its issues, then Ranjan Raj Khanal would call the prime minister and explain to him how he had been commanded to ask his resignation because of the unfavourable situation and thus he would be forced to tender resignation."²⁶

With the re-establishment of democracy in 1990, specially with the promulgation of the 1990 Constitution, the trend has changed almost completely. Now the political parties are no longer outlawed. They can function freely and contest election both in legislature as well as in municipal bodies. It is the majority party in the lower house of the legislature, i.e., House of Representatives which elects the prime minister. The other members of the cabinet are nominated by the prime minister. Unlike in the Panchayat System, the palace cannot have any say in this regard. Neither can it do anything against its function. These facts reveal that basic changes are taking place in the practice of democracy in today's Nepal. Now the task of implementing the constitution and the fostering of democracy in Nepal correctly depends upon the sincerity of the leaders of the parties as well as the chair-holders.

Shortcomings of 1990 Constitution

Despite all the efforts undertaken towards democratising the constitution, it cannot be said that the present Constitution does not have any shortcomings. These days, the Nepalese people, the elite groups specially, have begun to raise a lot of questions in regard to certain provisions of the constitution. Some of the provisions that helped to raise such questions may be summed up as follows:-

Threat to Democratic Norms:- The main question or controversy that is being raised these days is in regard to the provision 'Hindu Kingdom'. Article 4.1 of the constitution envisages the nation not merely as a "multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign and

²⁵ Bhuwan Lal Joshi and Leo E. Rose, *Democratic Innovations in Nepal*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), p. 405

²⁶ *Yugsambad Weekly*, (Kathmandu), August 10, 1993

Constitutional Monarchical Kingdom"²⁷ but equally as a 'Hindu Kingdom'.²⁸

This provision has, of course, tried to elevate Nepal as the only Hindu Kingdom in the world. For the Hindus of all over the world, it has become a matter of consolation or solace that a Hindu nation is in existence even in the world of today. Nepal is declaring herself as a Hindu nation since a few centuries back. Even Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founder of modern Nepal, had implicitly mentioned the country as a Hindu kingdom with the words:- "a garden composed of four classes (*varnas*) and thirty-six castes."²⁹ Hence it was not unnatural that these words 'Hindu Kingdom' be not inscribed in the constitution.

From the international as well as propaganda point of view, it is a matter of great pride. But the other side of the coin is worse even. The provision of Hindu kingdom not merely negates the rights of certain sections of the Nepalese people but equally threatens the democratic norms. In a Hindu society, the Brahmin caste remains at the apex of the social structure while the Sudras at the lowest level. The Sudras are in the lowest ebb of the Hindu social structure. They are deprived of the fundamental rights like equality, liberty, etc. which have been the basic ideals of democracy. These people under Hinduism have had to spend life even lower than that of the slaves. Unlike the slaves, they are not entitled to enter into the rooms, kitchens etc. of the high caste people. Nor are they permitted to enter the prominent Hindu shrines like the Pashupatinath temple, the Guheshwari temple etc.. Thus it is a provision that not only fragments the people into different classes but also threatens the democratic norms and national integrity. Under the system, not merely the Christians and the Mohammadans but equally the Buddhists, the followers of a religion expounded by the son of this very land, had to face set-backs. Elaborating on such set-backs in those days, Joshi and Rose write that "During the rule of the Rana prime minister Juddha Shamsheer, the Buddhist monks of Kathmandu had been expelled from the country at the instigation of the Brahman priests."³⁰

Means to Exploit India:- At a certain time when the people of Nepal were uneducated and the rulers too were strong, this concept of Hindu kingdom worked well and bore excellent fruits too. The palace, say, King Mahendra had once tried to exploit the vast neighbouring nation India by raising that concept. He had tried to encroach into the Indian politics by staging himself as the only Hindu ruler or leader of the globe. Commenting on this matter, Rose had once written:-

"In a message to a stridently communal Hindu organisation in India, the King referred to Nepal as 'sentinel of India' and then went

²⁷ *The Constitution...*, f.n. No. 22, p. 3

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 3

²⁹ Hari Prasad Sharma Acharya, *Gorakshya Shahbansha*, (Varanasi: Vidya Bhawan, 2022 V.E.), p. 214

³⁰ Joshi and Rose, f.n. No. 25, p. 244

on to state 'Today we can protect and advance our nation and national society if all of us cease to have shyness or scruples about calling ourselves Hindus, but march forward and develop Hindu society and revitalise Hindu Dharma. It has become absolutely necessary for all the Hindus to realise this fully for the welfare of mankind.' In this context, this appeared to be an appeal to India to return to traditional Hindu ideals."³¹

Shaha also has a similar view which runs as:- "King Mahendra was motivated by a political desire to exploit the Hindu sentiment in India to combat the pressure Jawaharlal Nehru's government was putting on to him to adhere to democratic tradition ushered in by the 1951 revolution in Nepal."³²

Voices against Hindu Kingdom:- Unlike all other religions of the world, Hinduism is not a religion expounded by a single authority. Its seeds are rooted deep in the vital texts of the Vedas, the most ancient scriptures of the Hindus. This religion stipulated the practice of caste system, untouchability etc. since time immemorial. Hence spiritual leaders like the Mahavira, the Buddha, the Charvaka and others had to emerge in the religious arena in order to introduce reforms and brush away evils of this religion. In spite of so many blows faced by it, this religion has not been able to reflect better expressions of the time. It has been holding the encrusted traditions of the past still now. As a result, the Nepalese people of the lower caste have had to suffer setbacks on so many places. They are deprived of the right to equal opportunity guaranteed by the constitution. They are prevented to enter into the prominent Hindu shrines. Only the students of the higher caste enjoy the privileges of lodging, fooding, stipend and scholarships at the only Sanskrit hostel in Kathmandu. In this way, they are being cheated on so many areas only because of the religion. The palace could have done a lot to deliver the downtrodden people from these constraints. In lieu of it, it helped to flare up this tragedy by incorporating the word 'Hindu Kingdom' in the constitution. Hence, it is not unnatural that so many elites, including the political leaders, have started to raise voices against this concept. Some instances may be referred as:-

- A. Dal Singh Kami, speaking at the National Assembly (Upper House), expresses:- "What does my religion belong? If I am a Hindu, I should have the right to enter at Pashupati but I was not entitled this right. It is not a matter of justice."³³
- B. Bhikkshu Aswaghosh, recollecting his own experiences in the

³¹ Sanu Bhai Dangol, "A Critique on the Palace and the Present Constitution", *Nepali Political Science and Politics: An Annual Journal Vol.II*, (Kathmandu: Political Science Association of Nepal, 1993), p. 77

³² Rishikesh Shaha, *Nepali Politics: Retrospect and Prospect*, (New Delhi: Delhi Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 214

³³ Bhikkshu Aswaghosh, "Rastriya Sabha Ra Mera Anubhabharu", *Dharmakirti Monthly*, (Kathmandu: May 1993), p. 27

National Assembly, writes:-

"My religious policy is that the incorporation of the word 'Hindu Kingdom' in the constitution is not an act of democratic value. Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious country. It is not justifiable that Nepal becomes a Hindu state. If it had remained seeular, it would have been in consonance with the principles of democracy. ...In the National Assembly, I made a proposal so that the constitution be made secular but the proposal was discarded undemocratically without being discussed. Where is our democracy?"³⁴

C. Jawahar Rokka, writing a letter to *Tishari Duniya*, comments:-

"Hinduism, based on caste system (barnaashram dharma), can never guarantee the right to equality. Its objective is to create slavery. In a society where there is slavery, democracy can never be speculated. ...In 1990, there was a revolution in Nepal and multi-party democracy was re-established as a result of it. This news circulated at the international level. And the rich nations of the world extended to Nepal huge amount of grants and co-operation. But despite raising the standard of the untouchables (*achhutas*) it was rather institutionalised. The leaders who boasted to bring socialism and communism by uprooting feudalism also seemed to patronise this institution of untouchability."³⁵

Hinduism for Safeguarding Selfish Ends:- Nepal is much more a land of Buddhism than of Hinduism. The births of three Buddhas (Kanakmuni Buddha, Krakuchhanda and Siddhartha Gautam) are the matter of prestige and glory for the entire people of Nepal. The political and other leaders have never failed to capitalise on this fact in the international forum. But it is a tragedy that the constitution has emphasised on Hinduism and banned religious conversion, say, conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism even. The reason behind it is:-

"Hinduism has remained so far the privileged preserve of the upper castes, and as such, has offered the traditional power elites a spiritual justification to rule over the masses who belong in the Hindu hierarchy to the lower levels. The surprising fact is that there has hardly been any successful reform movements within Hinduism in Nepal on the scale of the Arya Samaj, for example, in India."³⁶

Question Mark on Symbol of National Unity:- The other provisions that are being questioned these days are regarding the King's position as "an adherent of Aryan Culture and Hindu religion"³⁷ and as

³⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 25-7

³⁵ *Tisari Duniya*, (New Delhi: May-July 1993), p. 5

³⁶ Misra, f.n. No. 17, p. 12

³⁷ *The Constitution...*, f.n. No. 19, p. 20

"symbol of Nepalese nationality and unity of the people."³⁸ The opposition's version regarding them is that Nepal has been and is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual nation as the constitution too declares. From the time of its unification by Prithvi Narayan Shah, the nation is being politically and economically dominated by a handful of families, i.e., the Brahmin and Kshatriya communities. With the advent of democracy in Nepal in 1951 too, the tradition did not change. In spite of uplifting the downtrodden and neglected communities, the Panchayat System tried to consolidate the stranglehold of these upper communities. In the words of Shaha

"...the panchayat system has not only strengthened the traditional hold of the influential castes and families on the economy and politics of the village but has, in some cases, as for example in the far-eastern hill districts of Illam, alienated the indigenous inhabitants such as the Limbu by encouraging the dominance of the Brahmins."³⁹

Misra adds further with the words "What Shaha says about the indigenous groups in the hilly areas is much more true of the indigenous tribal groups of the Terai, such as the Tharus, Rajbanshis, Tajpurias, Gangais, Mechis, and other small tribes."⁴⁰

Tracing so many facts like these, they begin to ask:-

"In the 1990s how can a monarch who is not only 'a follower of the Hindu religion', but also 'an adherent of Aryan culture', be the symbol of unity of a nation when its major chunk of population -- to say nothing of other religious minorities -- is Buddhists and non 'Aryan', and the so-called Aryan and Hindu people from the Terai have always been so treated as second-class citizens that they never got an opportunity to identify themselves with the national mainstream. The very incorporation of the king in the constitution as Arya and Hindu is racial and partisan. So the myth that the Crown is a symbol of national unity is as untenable as the argument that people of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds posit faith in and identify themselves with the crown."⁴¹

Parallel Body:- There are certain other features which are taken as controversial features. One of them is the incorporation of *Raj Parishad* in the constitution. Critics believe that such a constitutional body is of no use in a nation where the provision for an upper legislative body exists already. According to them, it is a very expensive body arranged in parallel with the upper legislative body and should not have a place in a poor nation like ours. The *Suruchi*, in its commentary under the title "The Intention of the Palace is

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 20

³⁹ Shaha, f.n. No. 32, p. 23

⁴⁰ Misra, f.n. No. 20, p. 10

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 11

Dubious" writes:-

"The democratic Nepal has made provisions for two legislative bodies,--the popularly elected House of Representatives and the National Assembly comprising highly reputed persons who have made solid contributions on diverse walks of national life. There is also a minister to carry on palace affairs. Then why should there be the Raj Parishad? If a military leader is to be adjusted, that can be done by nominating a retired military officer in the National Assembly in consideration of his commendable records in war. Not merely that, the important figures from all walks of national life can be nominated in this body. A separate royal palace committee also can be arranged in it provided the parliament is given opportunity to advise the King. Why to constitute a Raj Parishad? The constitutional monarch's duty is to carry on activities as is being advised by the parliament and the government but why should we spend more by constituting a committee like Raj Parishad? Besides that, what is the use of the Press Secretary in the palace? At a time when there is a minister to arrange all the matters of the King or when the prime minister himself is looking into the palace affairs, it is better that institutions like this be abolished. The retention of such a body does imply that the palace wishes to retain a parallel committee."⁴²

Dubious Activities

Questions are being raised as regards the national anthem and other symbols like cow, rhododendron etc. too. Being the matters of least importance from the national view-points, they are not being mentioned here. But it is to be noted that the palace has been playing a very dubious role even after the re-establishment of democracy in 1990. The appointment of Kalyan Bikram Adhikari to the post of ambassador also to France by the palace has been challenged in the Supreme Court. The palace has been accused for nominating members of dubious character in the Raj Parishad and the National Assembly. The interview by King Birendra to *The Independent* also has been repudiated as undue intervention in Nepalese politics. These are some of the matters which made the Nepalese scholars to recollect the words of Shaha in regard to King Birendra's view on constitutional monarch and the words run as:-

"King Birendra's view of constitutional monarchy is not the usually accepted one in which both the king and his people derive their rights and responsibilities from the constitution, which can be changed at any time by the required majority of the votes of the people, or of their representatives, in popularly elected national legislatures. His theory of constitutional monarchy seems to be

largely influenced by his concept of a king as God among people. King Birendra's published statements suggest that he places himself above the government and the constitution because both of them are his creations."⁴³

Inalienable Features of Constitution

With the promulgation of the 1990 Constitution, the first task entrusted to the Interim Coalition Government headed by Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai got completed very successfully. Whatever might be the words expressed in regard to it, the 1990 Constitution, on a whole, may be taken as a milestone in the evolution of constitutional process. This constitution succinctly emphasises on the following as the inalienable features of the constitution:-

- a. Declaring the People as the Sovereign Authority of the nation;
- b. Guaranteeing Human Rights;
- c. Consolidating Adult Franchise, Parliamentary System of Government, Constitutional Monarchy and Multi-party Democracy; and
- d. Establishing Rule of Law.

As regards these inalienable features, the words inscribed in the preamble of 1990 Constitution run as:-

"And whereas, in keeping with the desire to promulgate and enforce this Constitution, made with the widest possible participation of the Nepalese people, to guarantee basic human rights to every citizen of Nepal; and also to consolidate the Adult Franchise, the Parliamentary System of Government, Constitutional Monarchy and the System of Multi-party Democracy by promoting amongst the people of Nepal the spirit of fraternity and bond of unity on the basis of liberty and equality; and also to establish an independent and competent system of justice with a view to transforming the concept of the Rule of Law into a living reality;"⁴⁴

Election Results

With the promulgation of the new constitution, the task that was being left before the interim government was to conduct free and fair elections – elections for the 205 members of the House of Representatives. For this purpose, 12th May, 1991 was fixed as the election date and the elections too were held as per programme schedule. Despite Prime Minister Bhattarai's successful leadership in the interim government, he was made to suffer defeat in the election. Contrary to the belief that the balance of seats would be shared by the three major parties -- the Nepali Congress, the different

⁴³ Shaha, f.n. No. 32, p. 211

⁴⁴ *The Constitution...*, f.n. No. 22, p. 1

Communist groups and the National Democratic Party -- the election results went in favour of the Nepali Congress. The other parties whom the people chose as the main opposition forces were the Communist parties. "Thus the prognosis of many about the probability of a post election coalition government proved wrong by the people as a whole."⁴⁵ The main surprise of the election was the crushing defeat of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party which could secure only four seats in the House of Representatives. The result, in a way, spelled the total rejection of the old Panchayat System by the Nepali people. Whatever might be the outcome of election result, it was but another great achievement in the election history of Nepal and on the part of the interim coalition government headed by Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai too.

Inaction of Interim Coalition Government

Despite its grand success in the accomplishment of two major tasks, i.e., the promulgation of 1990 Constitution and the conduct of fair and free elections, the interim coalition government is much commented for not initiating any action against the culprits who tried to suppress the people's movement during 1990. In order to investigate on this matter, a commission under Judge Janardan Lal Mallik had already been set up. The commission headed by Mallik had presented a clear report on 31st December, 1990 recommending for a direct course of action. In spite of such a report Prime Minister Bhattarai was not in a mood to initiate any action.

Raeper and Hoftun quotes Bhattarai's words in this context: "I did not want to take action because the election was the target. I did want to antagonise the police and therefore to disturb its fabric by punishing them on fictitious or --in certain cases -- real grounds. I also did not want to antagonise the civil service because they were the people who would hold the elections."⁴⁶

The other problem faced by the government in this connection was that no political force in the country was prepared to confront with the palace. The government officers or even the cabinet members could not be held responsible in a political system where the real source of power lay in the palace. Every person interviewed by the Mallik Commission had replied in unison that they only obeyed orders from above. The greatest hindrance in initiating such trial was that it would lead probably to the ultimate source of power, the palace. "Even Achut Kharel, the man believed to be responsible for the fate of many missing persons-- persons last heard of within the premises of the Police Training Centre in North Kathmandu --shrugged and answered that he had only followed the order of 'mathi'."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Shaha, f.n. No. 3, p. 247

⁴⁶ Raeper and Hoftun, f.n. No. 4, p. 152

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 152

However, the government did not remain silent in this matter. Leaving the final task of decision in the hands of the elected government, it dismissed five high level government officers and confiscated the passport of all the ministers of Marich Man Singh's government. Such an impotency was developed in Nepal because of the compromise reached during the people's movement of 1990. Nepal had never to face a real revolution. Once a movement got momentum, it was ended with a compromise.

Republican Attitude of Communist Forces

The election result exposed the weakness of the palace. In the new parliament, particularly in the House of Representatives, there was hardly any member who would support the palace in restoring its traditional authority. The members of the Nepali Congress, who had captured majority of seats or 110 seats in the House of Representatives were not in a mood to give prominence to the palace authority. They wanted to maintain the palace simply as an instrument to check the rise of Communist forces in Nepal. On the other hand, the Communists, who secured second position in the House, were in favour of a republican state. They simply took the palace as an obsolete institution committed to protect the interest of reactionary forces.

A survey of opinion polls carried on by the Political Science Association of Nepal during election hours in 1991 reveals how forty percent of the total party members in Nepal were in favour of a republican state. To quote Thapa

"..... Compared to the earlier election survey by POLSAN (Political Science Association of Nepal) during General Elections of May 12, 1991 in which (31.2%) of the voters expressed their desire to see Nepal as a republican state, our data show that among party members this feeling is little intense (39.8%) than among the common people. But if we look at this issue party-wise, the finding strongly approves that the very idea of republican state is largely shared by left voters. Now it appears that eighty-two percent of party members strongly confirm the idea of a republican state..... nearly equal percentages (27.8% and 27.1%) of the party members reveal that monarchy is a traditional feudal institution and protects the interests of reactionary forces. 17.2% of the party members felt that all the above choices listed in our question to be the disadvantages of monarchy. There are still others who feel that the monarchy either does not respect the people (12.3%), remains an obstacle to national economic development (8.1%), or is an economic burden to the country (6.5%)."⁴⁸

Similarly the words of Yadav in this context are:-

"Those members of parliament who supported the idea of a republican state had reason for it. For example, majority of left MPs (members of parliament) regard the monarchy to be a traditional feudal institution. This view is entirely held by Communist Party of Nepal-United (100.0%), majority of Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist or CPN-UML (64.9%), NeWPP or Nepal Workers Peasants Party (50.0%) and a little from United People's Front, Nepal (44.4%). This is how the Nepalese monarchy is portrayed in most left literature. A significant percentage account it for the protection of reactionaries and vested interest groups. The Nepal Workers Peasants Party scores the highest percentage (50.0%) in this regard and the CPN-UML consider it to be an economic burden, and an impediment to modernisation and development. A great percentage of the United People's Front, Nepal and CPN-UML note all the above disadvantages to be inherent in monarchy."⁴⁹

Koirala Government and Mid Term Polls

The election result made the Nepali Congress emerge as the largest party of the country. Owing to Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai's defeat in the election, Girija Prasad Koirala was selected as the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Board. On 29th May, 1991, Koirala was appointed to the post of prime minister of Nepal and on that very day, a government of the Nepali Congress was formed under his leadership. Girija Prasad Koirala was a prime minister of adamant nature unlike Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. He tried to carry on his own plans and programmes without listening to the words of anyone and even of the Nepali Congress. This made Prime Minister Koirala very much unpopular both within the party and outside. The result was that he was made to face several moves and counter-moves from all quarters of the country.

As a first move, the Nepal Civil Servants' Organisation (NCSO) organised agitation programme because the new government was not in a mood to comply with the agreement which it had made with the interim government. From 30th June, 1991, the NCSO started agitation programme in the name of pen-down strike, demonstrations, processions, human solidarity chains etc. etc.. Supporting the cause, the CPN-UML asked the government to stop "repressive measures such as dismissing, suspending and arresting the employees."⁵⁰

The Tanakpur issue was another move which emerged as a threat to the Koirala government. Prime Minister Koirala, during his visit to India,

⁴⁹ Lalbabu Yadav, "Republican State: Continuity and Change," *Political Parties and the Parliamentary Process in Nepal: A Study of the Transitional Phase*, (Kathmandu: Political Science Association of Nepal, 1992), p. 273

⁵⁰ *Gorkhapatra*, (Kathmandu), July 25, 1991

had entered into a secret agreement with India on Tanakpur barrage. This agreement, which was being made in the name of understanding, contradicted the provisions of the constitution. Prime Minister Koirala did not have any authority to enter into such agreement without being ratified by the parliament. The issue took a serious turn on December 15, 1992 when the Supreme Court decided it as an agreement in lieu of understanding. Even after the decision, the Koirala government tried to ratify this agreement by a simple majority of parliament. It was such a process which could damage even the position of the Nepali Congress. Hence, the supreme leader of the Nepali Congress, Ganesh Man Singh, challenged the process by sending a letter of warning. The letter expressed that "It would be like the signing a death warrant if the Tanakpur agreement is sought to be ratified by a simple majority of the House of Representatives."⁵¹

While the Tanakpur issue was going on in that way, the Koirala government have had to face another set-back. The set-back made its emergence as and when the one-man commission consisting of Prachanda Raj Anil submitted its report on the tragic death of the two CPN-UML leaders,—Madan Bhandari and Jib Raj Asrit. On the day of 17th June, 1993 when the commission submitted its report, the CPN-UML rejected the report of Anil commission charging it as motivated, one sided, false and misleading. In the meantime, it demanded for the formation of an another high level commission consisting of an incumbent judge of the Supreme Court. The UML Enquiry Team headed by Khadga Prasad Oli had prepared a separate report in that regard. The report did not take the accident simply as an accident but as a conspiracy to assassinate their leaders in which the driver Amar Lama was not the culprit alone. As regards this set-back, the weekly *Newsweek* makes a comment:-

"A four-wheeled-drive vehicle plunged 50 metres into a Himalayan river this May, killing two top leaders of the Nepal Communist Party. The government's investigators blamed the crash on driver's negligence. The Communists saw an official conspiracy to kill their charismatic general secretary, Madan Kumar Bhandary. They called a general strike demanding a second investigation, which soon flared into one of Nepal's worst outbreaks of violence in decades. Over five days, more than 100,000 protestors rampaged in Kathmandu, breaking windows and leaving streets littered with bricks. Estimates of death toll ranged from 10 to 30. Late last week the Communists were calling for more protests and ouster of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. Officials of the ruling Congress party were urging their supporters to retaliate, which the new NCP general secretary, Madhav Kumar Nepal, described as 'a call for civil war.'⁵²

A problem like this, as the *Newsweek* suggests, could have been

⁵¹ *Punarjagaran*, (Kathmandu), March 9, 1993

⁵² *Newsweek*, (USA), July 12, 1993

solved by the palace if it had won the people's confidence in the past. But the political leaders of both the major parties of the nation--the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML-- were not in a mood to take the palace into confidence. Moreover, the warnings of the supreme leader, Ganesh Man Singh, also had worked a lot in this context. The supreme leader's warning in this context was that "the misunderstanding between us is a matter of our own. We should not talk of fighting with each other while a tiger is coming in front of us. The first task that we have had to do is to jointly encounter with the tiger. ... And the situation at this moment calls for this."⁵³

Hence the two strongest parties entered into an agreement on 17th August, 1993. While entering into this agreement, the Nepali Congress leaders gave assurance that they would remove Girija Prasad Koirala from the post of prime minister following constitutional procedure.

After entering into the agreement, the Nepali Congress asked Prime Minister Koirala to resign from his post which he declined to obey. Hence, the Nepali Congress tried to oust Koirala by sending Krishna Prasad Bhattarai to the House of Representatives. But this plan too did not succeed because of Prime Minister Koirala's strategy to defeat Bhattarai at the bye-election. Really at the bye- election held on 7th February, 1994 at Kathmandu district, Constituency No.1, Bhattarai lost election with Mrs. Vidya Bhandari, Comrade Madan Bhandari's widow.

The defeat of Bhattarai divided the Nepali Congress into two blocs--one of Bhattarai's group and another of Koirala's. Immediately after the election results, the anti-Koirala group organised protest demonstrations against Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala calling him to resign from his post. To quote the *Nepal Press Digest* "after the result of the Kathmandu bye-election was announced, dissatisfied workers of the Nepali Congress and the Nepal Student's Federation organised demonstration calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala."⁵⁴ "They had done so in the belief that the Prime Minister 'sabotaged' the election campaign of Krishna Prasad Bhattarai."⁵⁵

Similarly the words of other press medias in this context are:-

"On February 9, the dissidents took out a picture of Prime Minister Koirala from the Central Office of the Party and garlanded it with shoes. The Nepali Congress flag at the office was hoisted at half-mast on that day. The Vice-Chairman of the National Planning Commission, Ram Saran Mahat, was manhandled by the excited workers on the charge of 'subversion'. "⁵⁶

They also shouted slogans against Prime Minister Girija Prasad

⁵³ *Suruchi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 11, 1993

⁵⁴ *Nepal Press Digest*, (Kathmandu: Nepal Press Digest (Pvt.) Ltd., 1994), p. 68

⁵⁵ *Rastapukur Weekly*, (Kathmandu), February 9, 1994

⁵⁶ *Kantipur Daily*, (Kathmandu), February 10, 1994

Koirala, and called Krishna Prasad Bhattarai to open a new party. The next day they took out a procession from Baneshwar, which terminated after a meeting at Chabahil. Addressing the meeting, Surendra Pandey, representative of Nepal Students Federation's Central Committee, asked the pacesion to exterminate 'subversive' elements of the party irrespective of his position as a Prime Minister or other. The anti-Girija demonstrations continued on February 11 too.

The demonstrations would have taken a violent turn had the party president, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, not asked the demonstrators to wait for the decision of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) scheduled to be on 16th February, 1994. But the tragedy was that even the CWC proved failure in controlling the arbitrary nature of Prime Minister Koirala. This made a large number of the Congress Parliamentary Board (CPB) to be infuriated. Among them were the former ministers too whom Prime Minister Koirala had dropped while resuffling the cabinet on 30th December, 1992. He had dropped them without giving prior notice to them and not consulting even with his senior colleagues-- Ganesh Man Singh and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai-- the supreme leader of the nation and the Congress Party's acting president respectively. This group determined to oust Prime Minister Koirala from his post by adopting all kinds of measures. The result was that, on 10th July, 1994, they remained absent in the House of Representatives making the policy and programmes of the government to be defeated. Prime Minister Koirala took the step of the dissident members of the CPB very seriously. He requested the King to dissolve the House of Representatives and to call a mid-term polls which the King too complied with.

Reactionary Activities of the Palace

The activities of the palace remained controversial even after the promulgation of 1990 Constitution. The first activity which was being taken as controversial in the begining was the appointment of Kalyan Bikram Adhikari to the post of ambassador also to France. Against the appointment of Adhikari, Advocate Radheshyam Adhikari filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court implying it to be an unconstitutional step. In the writ petition, the decision of the Supreme Court was:- "Except as otherwise expressly provided as to be exercised exclusively by His Majesty or at His discretion the powers of His Majesty in making such appointments shall be exercised upon the recommendation and advice, and with the consent of the Council of Ministers."⁵⁷ And "the incorporation of these words in the decision imply that while giving appointment to ambassadors or to other similar posts, the King's name might not be misutilised in contravention to the provisions of the constitution."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Rastrapukar Weekly*, (Kathmandu), February 9, 1991

⁵⁸ Sanu Bhai Dangol, "Khanalko Rajtantra Dubaune Sallaha", *Bhuichalo Weekly*, (Kathmandu), June 8, 1996

On 9th June, 1991, King Birendra granted an audience to the opposition leader Man Mohan Adhikari, the President of CPN-UML. At the audience, the King threatened to initiate stern action if the political parties did not mend their ways. In the audience, the King also told that he would have to hold referendum on monarchy if the political parties did not show respect to this institution. As and when the words of King Birendra came to circulation, a strong reaction began to spread in the political circle. Responding to these words, Nirmal Lama, the leader of Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre) in an interview expressed that "An armed struggle of the Nepali model is necessary in Nepal. Monarchy cannot be abolished without an armed struggle....We may have to launch an armed struggle even against the Congress if it collides with the monarchy to suppress the Communists."⁵⁹

In the month August of 1991, the UML General Secretary, Madan Kumar Bhandari, got an audience with King Birendra. After that audience, Bhandari warned that the nation was being pushed towards an emergency. In that way, he gave the hint of an unholy alliance between the UML and rightist forces. Although communism and monarchy are of self-contradictory approaches, these two institutions got fused only in Nepal. And it is a surprising fact too. Referring to Bhandari's audience and words, the *Deshantar* in its editorial commented that "Against the background of the UML's support for the anarchical and destabilising agitation of the employees, the royal audience and the warning of an emergency is an attempt to revive the ghost of 1960."⁶⁰ Taking note of that unwanted audience, the general secretary of the Nepali Congress, Mahendra Narayan Nidhi, in his interview to the *Punarjagaran*, regretted that "The palace is doing many things without the knowledge of the government. For example, it is not providing any information to the government about the audience granted by the King to different individuals. It is not possible to raise even such issue before the palace."⁶¹ Thus he hinted to the fact that the King was trying to revive the steps undertaken by his late father King Mahendra. On 8th January, 1992, the King gave an interview to *The Independent Weekly*. With the words "Unforeseen economic factors and the question of political change within Nepalese society coincided with changes in the international arena which were unprecedented in recent history and monumental in scope and magnitude,"⁶² he ridiculed the spirit of the historic movement. Moreover, he advised the political parties and their leaders to strengthen the constitution by working sincerely in a democratic spirit. The words of King Birendra in this context are:- "To the extent that all the political parties and all the major elements at work in society work sincerely in its democratic spirit, the Constitution will

⁵⁹ *Nepali Awaj Weekly*, (Kathmandu), June 14, 1991

⁶⁰ *Deshantar Weekly*, (Kathmandu), August 18, 1991

⁶¹ *Punarjagaran Weekly*, (Kathmandu), August 27, 1991.

⁶² *The Independent Weekly*, (Kathmandu), January 8, 1992

be strengthened."⁶³

This interview by King Birendra evoked only negative reactions in the local press. The negative reactions outpoured by some of the local papers may be given respectively as:-

"His Majesty has ignored the spirit of constitutional monarchy and ridiculed the historic people's movement.... His Majesty has expressed the view that the Constitution can be strong only if political parties and leaders of the society act honestly according to the democratic spirit of the Constitution. No one can disagree with this view. But can it be taken as an advice? Is this the time for the King, who has just become a constitutional monarch, to give advice to political parties?"⁶⁴

"It is not proper for a constitutional monarch to make such statements about the policy, the Constitution, and the political system of the country."⁶⁵

"The constitutional monarchs of Britain and Thailand have never used the press to express their views. Our King has accepted the constitutional system of the British model. But one wonders whether this attitude is consistent with system."⁶⁶

"The untimely, dubious and mysterious interview has substantiated fear that the conspiracy to scuttle the restored democracy has reached its final stage. The interview, in fact, reminds one of the events that preceded the 1960 step, specially the statement that 'Our future steps will clarify the role of constitutional monarchy.' This means that the King wants to be 'active' as in the Panchayat period and does not relish the role of a constitutional monarch."⁶⁷

Ganesh Man Singh against Royal Strategy

On 3rd May, 1993, the King had a secret meeting with Ganesh Man Singh in which he tried to utilise Singh as a tool for dragging Minister Khum Bahadur Khadka and Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on the charge of corruption. As Singh was cautious of the palace conspiracy, he did not join hands with the King. The late King Mahendra also had attempted to have Ganesh Man Singh in his favour before staging a coup in 1960. The step of King Mahendra proved failure when Singh did not wish to side with him. In the words of the *Weekly Pristhabhumi*

"According to a reliable source, the King tried to serve his own ends

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 6

⁶⁴ *Saptahik Vimarsha*, (Kathmandu), January 10, 1992

⁶⁵ *Biswabhumi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), January 10, 1992

⁶⁶ *Chalpal Weekly*, (Kathmandu), January 12, 1992

⁶⁷ *Punarjagaran Weekly*, (Kathmandu), January 14, 1992

by utilising Ganesh Man at a time when misunderstanding within the Nepali Congress was at its peak. On the evening of 3 May, 1993, a summit was held between the King and Ganesh Man as per programme arranged in the morning. At this meeting, the King tried to drag the minister and prime minister of the democratic government on the charge of corruption undermining the spirit of democracy.....As the controversy between them grew a little more, Ganesh Man warned the palace of giving lift to the Girija government in spite of its failure to win support both from the party and the people.....Being cautious of the palace conspiracy which could utilise him as a stooge, Ganesh Man asked the king not to interfere in the constitutional process.....While being asked to seek alternate, Ganesh Man (is said to have) responded that it was purely an internal affairs of our party."⁶⁸

Seating Arrangement and Charges against Palace

On 17th September, 1993, the parliament hosted a reception in honour of King Birendra. The reception was arranged at the Parliament building inside Singh Darbar in order to mark the ending of the fifth session of the parliament. While arranging reception, no seating arrangements were made properly for the VVIPs including the prime minister and chairman of National Assembly. The Congress Parliamentary Board took this matter very seriously as and when it came to learn that the seating arrangements had been made as per instructions from the military officers, specially of the palace. The board smelt some mischief on behalf of the palace and hence implicitly warned against such mischiefs.

The words of Mahendra Narayan Nidhi, General Secretary of the Nepali Congress, in this regard are:-

"There have been intrigues against our democracy since its initial phase and this is not the last one. Such intrigues might occur in future too. That is why, the culprit should be given severe punishment. This is an intrigue against our democracy and multi-party system too. The party will initiate necessary action against such intrigues."⁶⁹

The *Lumbini Daily's* version in this context runs as:-

"Today, the meeting of the Nepali Congress Parliamentary Board passed not merely a resolution regretting against the chairman (Daman Nath Dhungana) but Girija Prasad Koirala (Prime Minister) took this event equally as a conspiracy perpetrated against democracy. The prominent figures of the Girija lobby have begun to trace it as a conspiracy perpetrated from the palace. This event is

⁶⁸ *Pristhabhumi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), May 6, 1993

⁶⁹ *Vimarsha Weekly*, (Kathmandu), September 24, 1993

being taken not as a controversy arising out between the prime minister and the chairman but as a matter of direct confrontation between the Girija lobby and the palace."⁷⁰

Parliament Member Gambhir Jang Karki, similarly, makes an attack on Speaker Daman Nath Dhungana with the words:- "Tulasi Giri is taking rebirth in this country. The party and the government have had to think of it very seriously."⁷¹

Nomination of Dubious Members

Towards the second week of January 1993, the King nominated one hundred twenty members in the Council of State (*Raj Parishad*) in pursuance with Article 34 of the 1990 Constitution. As soon as the names of these members were flashed, the major newspapers in Kathmandu began to shower harsh words towards the palace for nominating members of dubious character. The harsh words showered by the prominent newspapers are given as below:-

"The king has re-established in the Council of State those Panchas who had been rejected by the pro-democracy movement and defeated in the general elections thereby showing that he has not yet been able to renounce the desire to become a pancha leader... The composition of Council of State reveals that the monarchy in Nepal is finding it difficult to adjust itself with democracy."⁷²

"The palace has once again teased the people. Democratic forces which believed that the King had accepted the new system and therefore decided to refrain from criticising him, have been stunned by the composition of the Council of State as announced by His Majesty. Anti-palace feeling have now once more emerged as a result. The King has ignored the revolutionary forces and rewarded traitors."⁷³

"Political circles feel that the nomination of anti-democratic elements is increasing within the palace. This step shows that the present government has not been able to understand the psychology of the palace and is allowing power to move toward the palace slowly. The composition of the Council has provided great encouragement to former panchas."⁷⁴

The nominated member Sahana Pradhan resigned from the membership of the Council of State expressing words like

"The Council of State nominated by His Majesty recently has been

⁷⁰ *Lumbini Daily*, (Kathmandu), September 19, 1993

⁷¹ *Deshantar Weekly*, (Kathmandu), September 19, 1993

⁷² *Punarjagaran*, (Kathmandu), January 12, 1993

⁷³ *Saptahik Vimarsha*, (Kathmandu), January 15, 1993

⁷⁴ *Swatantrata*, (Kathmandu), January 14, 1993

formed according to the provision of the constitution. However, it includes persons who have played a very reactionary role during the recent democratic political change. As such, I do not consider it appropriate to remain in the Council."⁷⁵

Towards the first week of July, 1993, King Birendra nominated three members of the National Assembly for the second time. At this time too, the nominated members were found to be of dubious character. The very name of the nominated members evoked resentment towards the palace. Expressing words of resentment, one of the senior most journalists of Nepal, Dikshit, writes:-

"Article 46 of the constitution has made provision regarding membership of the upper house from three sources. Section a. of this article highlights on the features of members to be nominated by His Majesty. According to this provision, the ten members to be nominated by His Majesty should be of high reputation, to say in other words, they should have rendered prominent service in various fields of national life... Under this provision, altogether thirteen members were nominated,-- ten members two years back and three members this very year on the vacant seats. A peep into the nominated members will make a judicious person, who has kept himself aloof from nepotism and favouritism, not merely difficult but equally impossible to justify that the nine out of the thirteen nominated members are the persons of high reputation or say they have rendered prominent services in various walks of our national life. If the real social, intellectual and creative activities of these members are brought into publication, the people of the nation themselves would be in a position to examine whether this provision of the constitution is not being actually raped?"⁷⁶

Taking this nomination as a mockery of democracy, the *Prakash Weekly* comments:-

"It is not an auspicious augury for the recently established democracy of the nation that the King, harnessing the non-communicative stage of the prominent political parties because of Girija Prasad Koirala's stubbornness, nominates persons who were actively engaged in suppressing down the revolution of the past. Among the nominated members, Ramesh Nath Pandey is the member of Marich Man Singh's cabinet who tried to save the dictatorial system of the past up to the last hour. Rabindra Chakravarti had been a member *Rastravadi Vidyarthi Mandal* already banned during the panchayat period. Man Bahadur Biswakarma is also a person of *Mandale*

⁷⁵ *Gorkhapatra*, (Kathmandu), January 21, 1993

⁷⁶ Madan Mani Dikshit "Sambidhan Ra Rashtriyasabha Sadasya Manonayan", *Yugsambad Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 6, 1993

(subversive) character expelled by the Janata Parishad of Matrika and Kirti Nidhi on the charge of immorality. Not only this, the King, while constituting Raj Parishad in the past, nominated 85 percent of the members from among the corrupt panchas and, thus, he trespassed the mandate of people's revolution of 1990. This step of the King had been opposed even by Ganesh Man Singh, the supreme leader of the Nepali Congress, while the present prime minister had expressed his support towards this step."⁷⁷

Mahendra Narayan Nidhi, Secretary General to the Nepali Congress, in response to a question, expresses:-

"It is not true that the King is deriving undue advantage because of our weakness. Attempts are being made to maintain the norms of constitutional monarchy. But it is not possible to do so all at once. We too are learning to maintain democratic norms. I do not think that the king will take wrong step immediately. If he takes wrong step, it will be detrimental to himself. It is already evident that in the initial phase of 1990 revolution, the King failed to concede and it went detrimental to his own interest. Monarchy can no longer exist when there will be low ebb of trust upon the king."⁷⁸

Success of Divide and Rule Policy

The divide and rule policy pursued on by the palace got success to a large extent when Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, President of the Nepali Congress, was defeated in the bye-election held in Kathmandu at Constituency No.1. In order to defeat Bhattarai in the election held on 7th February, 1994, the National Democratic Party and other reactionary forces sided with the candidate of the CPN-UML at the signal of the persons close to the palace. As regards the palace signal in defeating Bhattarai, the words of the *Rastrapukar* run as:-

"Marich Man Singh and Damodar Shamsheer J.B.R., the organisers of 'Save the Nation', an organisation of the former *Mandales* (subversive elements) which made appearance during the King's visit to China, and Yogi Narahari Nath, the prominent conspirator (to bring the *coup d'etat*) of 1960 have begun to campaign in favour of the UML candidate, Mrs. Vidya Bhandari, as had been signalled by the palace. Their only objective is to defeat Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. As they found the former pancha Jog Meher Shrestha not in a position to win election, they decided to cast their group vote in favour of the UML... Last week, the press media of the UML published how the yogis too are in favour of Mrs. Vidya Bhandari. Recently Yogi Narahari, in an appeal, has requested to cast vote in

⁷⁷ *Prakash Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 5, 1993

⁷⁸ *Nepal Jagaran Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 5, 1993

favour of the UML. In the bygone election too, the palace people had defeated Prime Minister Bhattarai by aligning themselves with Madan Bhandari at the last hours. The outlook of these reactionary forces has been that they can avenge the people's revolution only by defeating its most effective leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai."⁷⁹

The other person who extended full support and co-operation in this connection was Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. The involvement of Koirala in the task of defeating Bhattarai enraged a lot of the Nepali Congress members and thus paved way for party split. Immediately after the election results in Kathmandu, "the angry supporters spilled onto the streets chanting: Anti-national Koirala Quit. Saboteur Koirala has no right to continue in the party."⁸⁰ And similarly "forty parliamentary members of the Nepali Congress expressed their firm determination to oust Prime Minister Koirala from his post."⁸¹

The anti-Koirala bloc persisted on its own stand not being deterred even by Prime Minister Koirala's threat to call for a mid-term poll. Prime Minister Koirala's attempt to avert his own ouster did not work well. On 10th July, 1994, the thirty-six Nepali Congress members of the House of Representatives remained absent in the house and thus made the government's policies and programmes to be defeated. Immediately after this defeat, Prime Minister Koirala recommended King Birendra to dissolve the House of Representatives and to announce mid-term elections which the King complied with on 11th July, 1994.

Comparison with Indira Gandhi's Declaration of Emergency

Prime Minister Koirala's attempt to dissolve the House of Representative might, in a way, be compared to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's imposition of emergency in India in 1975. Both these prime ministers had faced intra party rivalries and hence were compelled to dissolve the parliament. In regard to India's emergency, Indira Gandhi was favoured by the public support and, hence, she could command abundant mandate after the mid-term poll. In Girija Prasad Koirala's case, the environment was otherwise. Koirala also could not note that the revivalist and reactionary forces were working behind in the name of the head of state in Nepal unlike that of India.

Resentment towards Palace

The dissolution of the House of Representatives evoked resentment of the people, specially of the political leaders, towards the palace. It was not unnatural for the political leaders to show such resentment because of the

⁷⁹ *Rastrapukar Weekly*, (Kathmandu), January 26, 1994

⁸⁰ *India Today*, (New Delhi), February 17, 1994

⁸¹ *Swatantrata Weekly*, (Kathmandu), February 17, 1994

deceptive nature of the palace. On 10th and 11th July, 1994, the King had met a large number of political leaders, constitutional experts and other dignitaries representing diverse walks of Nepal's national life. He tried to thrash out a solution for the problem by consulting with all of them. To quote the *Saptahik Vimarsha*

"The president of the ruling party, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, and the president and the secretary general of the leading opposition party, Man Mohan Adhikari and Madhav Nepal respectively, also had met the King in this context. While returning from the palace, these leaders expressed that their talk with the King had become most 'fruitful' and that the King would not undertake any measure that would undermine their wishes. They were startled on the night of 11th July when they listened to the news of dissolving the House of Representatives and announcing the mid-term polls. According to the persons who met the King, the King had expressed to them a sentiment like their own and had assured that he would not do anything in contradiction to their sentiments. It is said, this was the innate speciality of His Majesty. During the meeting, the leaders of the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML had expressed to the King that their own party should be given opportunity to form government and that the King should neither dissolve the house nor announce mid-term polls. To these leaders, the King assured that he would do the same as they had wished. As a result, the UML leaders, who met the king for two times, i.e., on the evening of 10th and 11th July, had consulted expert-intellectuals of diverse spheres and asked them to extend their co-operation and goodwill for the government to be formed by them."⁸²

Immediately after the dissolution, there were outbursts of dissatisfaction and resentment towards the palace from different quarters of the nation. The framers of the 1990 Constitution were also not satisfied with this step of King Birendra. The eight among eleven former ministers who had helped to frame the constitution were of the opinion that "the dissolution of the House of Representatives by the King on the recommendation of a prime minister who had lost majority is an action initiated in contradiction with the spirit of the constitution."⁸³ The eight former ministers who expressed such opinion were Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Mahendra Narayan Nidhi, Yog Prasad Upadhaya, Sahana Pradhan, Jhalanath Khanal, Dr. Devendra Raj Pandey, Dr. Mathura Prasad Shrestha and Nilambar Acharya. While giving advice in this context, Chief Justice Viswa Nath Upadhaya, the then chairman of Constitution Drafting Commission, had expressed that His Majesty should not drag himself to controversy by dissolving the House of Representatives. The supreme leader Ganesh Man Singh's words in this context were that

⁸² *Vimarsha Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 15, 1994

⁸³ *Punarjagaran Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 26, 1994

"The hasty decision to dissolve the parliament on the recommendation of a defeated prime minister, who also had resigned, has helped to raise questions on the impartiality (of the King). This may lead to the tradition of dissolving the parliament at every six month. I appeal to His Majesty to reinstate the House of Representatives by correcting his mistake."⁸⁴

Protesting against this step, the six left parties, accompanied also by the UML, organised strike (*bandh*) and other programmes. In connection with these programmes, the Co-ordinator of Central Protest Committee, Bam Dev Gautam, spoke:-

"If the King has deliberately dissolved the House of Representatives or if he wishes to involve himself in politics, I would like to be clear--we are also the republicans. If the King trespasses the boundary of constitution brought forth by the tripartite agreement, it is not necessary that we would be following the constitution....We have mentioned this fact already in the past. We are prepared to tame the white elephant by affording it necessary provisions. We are still now prepared for the same by allocating five hundred thousands in lieu of four hundred thousand (rupees). But we are not in a mood to let it go astray."⁸⁵

Similarly, Nirmal Lama, President of the Unity Centre (*Ekti Kendra*) opposed the step of King Birendra as contradictory to the constitutional spirit and expressed that the elected parliamentarians should summon their session at the Open Theatre so that the House of Representatives be reinstated. The Secretary General of the Nepali Congress, Mahendra Narayan Nidhi, similarly, uttered:

"Today, not merely the party of ours, but the democracy and nation equally are facing crisis. The architect of this crisis is the prime minister while the King also has aligned in this action. The prime minister is only a stooge while the national and foreign elements, who do not want the welfare of Nepal and the Nepalese, had utilised the palace as a centre (means) to perpetrate such actions."⁸⁶

Man Mohan Adhikari, President of the CPN-UML, also expressed a similar view at a general meeting of the party and the words expressed by him run as:-

"The King has no right to dissolve the parliament. We are strongly opposed to the palace for its alignment with Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala.... The palace has committed a mistake. If the mistake is not corrected, not only Girija but the King also will have

⁸⁴ *Ibid*

⁸⁵ *Ibid*

⁸⁶ *Nepal Jagaran Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 25, 1994

to meet his own end"⁸⁷

The most vehement reaction or attack came from Nanda K. Prasai, one of the prominent members of the Left Forces. To quote the *Deshantar Saptahik* "The movement organised by the Left Forces will install Ganesh Man Singh (the supreme leader) of the Nepali Congress as the president of the nation by eliminating monarchy from Nepal."⁸⁸ He made this utterance while addressing a protest demonstration at Itahari organised by the six left parties on 18th August, 1994.

Moves to Reinstate House of Representatives

While the reactions against royal step were pouring on in this way, the Nepali Congress opposed to Prime Minister Koirala's bloc and the six left parties joined their hands and undertook moves to reinstate the House of Representatives. As a first move, Mahendra Narayan Nidhi, on behalf of the Nepali Congress, submitted a petition to the King on 23rd July, 1994 requesting him to dismiss the Koirala government and to reinstate the constitutional process. Similarly, on 27th July, Beni Bahadur Karki, Chairman of the National Assembly, led a procession-delegation of one hundred five members of the dissolved house to the royal palace. In the palace, the delegation handed over a petition requesting King Birendra for the reinstatement of the dissolved house. While submitting petition, the Nepali Congress, did not think that it should have, first of all, initiated stern action against Prime Minister Koirala than submitting a petition to the King. Before submitting petition, the members of parliament and even the acting president of Nepali Congress Krishna Prasad Bhattarai had gone to the Prime Minister's residence in this context. At that time Bhattarai, as the party president, should have given his verdict without yielding to Prime Minister Koirala. But it was not being done. But in contradiction to this approach, the party went to submit a petition. As regards the submitting of petition the *Gorkhapatra* writes:

"The petition was signed by Mahendra Narayan Nidhi, General Secretary of the Nepali Congress, as well as 34 dissident ex MPs (Members of Parliament) of the Nepali Congress... The petition was also signed by 67 MPs of the UML. Other signatories included the UPP (United People's Front) leaders Lilamani Pokharel, Amik Sherchan, Kamal Chaulagain, and Kaman Singh Lama."⁸⁹

On this very day, i.e., Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Man Mohan Adhikari, the presidents respectively of the Nepali Congress and the UML, published a joint statement welcoming these attempts. In the statement, they also added

⁸⁷ *Suruchi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 31, 1994

⁸⁸ *Deshantar Saptahik*, (Kathmandu), August 21, 1994

⁸⁹ *Gorkhapatra*, (Kathmandu), July 28, 1994

"Everyone should realize that the democracy, parliamentary system, and nationalism face a major crisis today. We, therefore, express full agreement with the demand for immediate dismissal of the government headed by G.P. Koirala, and call for an immediate constitutional solution to the serious crisis that has arisen in the country as a result of the decision taken by His Majesty on the basis of wrong advice."⁹⁰

The other move undertaken in this direction was the filing of writ petitions in the Supreme Court seeking annulment of the dissolution of House of Representatives and subsequently the calling of mid-term polls. While seeking annulment, they also maintained that the recommendation of Prime Minister Koirala to dissolve the house and to call mid-term polls is based on malafide intention and therefore unconstitutional. The attempts of these groups proved failure because of the quashing of writ petition by supreme court. The seven out of eleven-members of the full bench quashed the writ petition. In the verdict of 12th September, 1994, the Supreme Court ruled that "the recommendations were without any malafide intention and the dissolution of the parliament to seek a fresh mandate from the electorate was in accordance to parliamentary practices."⁹¹ Similarly on the issue of the King's discretionary prerogatives, the court also ruled that "the evaluation and decision resulting from the use of discretionary powers by the King could not be subjected to the court, hence was outside the purview of the court's consideration."⁹²

Formation of UML Government and Its Activities

The Supreme Court's verdict did not provide any other alternative to the political parties of Nepal except to go for mid-term polls. The mid-term polls were conducted all over the country on 15th November, 1994. The Nepali Congress could not secure majority in the parliament as it had expected because of the opposition of the dissident group within the party. By securing 88 seats in the 205 member House of Representatives, the CPM-UML emerged as the largest political party although it too could not command majority. The stake of the Nepali Congress, the second largest party securing 82 seats in the lower House, to form a coalition government did not succeed. The CPN-UML was not in a mood to forge alliance with the Nepali Congress under the latter's leadership in the government. With an intention to form government of its own, the UML elected Man Mohan Adhikari as the leader of the Parliament. As the exploration of a coalition government proved failure, the King, on 29th November, 1994, "appointed Man Mohan Adhikary as the Prime Minister of a minority government in

⁹⁰ *Nepali Patra Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 29, 1994

⁹¹ *The Kathmandu Post*, (Kathmandu), September 13, 1994

⁹² *Ibid*

accordance with Article 42(2) of the present constitution ..."⁹³ As no other political parties were in a mood to go for another mid-term polls immediately, they gave their support to this minority government at least for six months. Thus a Communist government was formed in Nepal for the first time in its history.

The government of the UML was cautious of its position since its initial phase. It was aware that it might have to suffer defeat or go to the mid-term polls any time after six months. Hence, being prepared to face for such a situation, the government tried to win the favour of the ordinary people. For this sake, the government launched campaigns and programmes like 'Let Us Build Our Village Ourselves' and allocated a budget of three hundred thousand rupees to each village of the nation. Moreover, it tried to strengthen its own position by joining hands with the palace. In order to win favour of the palace, it gave political appointments to innumerable ill-reputed persons on the instruction of the palace. That outlook made the government to deviate from its track. The UML government emerged in the nation as a reactionary force. It remained no more in a position to fulfill the promises which it had given to the people at the time of mid-term polls. As regards the CPN-UML government's deviation from its track, the words expressed by Vishnu Bahadur Manandhar, Secretary General of the Communist Party of Nepal (United), run as:-

"With a view to retain its power intact, the UML is joining hands with the forces affiliated to the palace circle. We do not fully agree with the view which the ministers spoke in regard to the King. The other thing is that the persons, being defamed by the Mallik Commission, have been over-estimated (venerated). Whether the ambassadors, enjoying relations with the palace, have been called back? What sort of (wrong) persons have been elevated on the government medias? The government has taken help from those who had been mobilised by the zonal commissioners yesterday. Thus the UML is marching ahead hand in hand with the forces of the palace (not the King) in order to sustain its position. Our party regrets on this fact gravely."⁹⁴

Similarly the words of Lila Mani Pokharel, the secretary general of United People's Front, in this regard are:-

"The same innumerable leaders, who once made renunciation and sacrifice against the then state power, have begun to say how the country and the King are to be served well. In the general meetings and conferences, they have given priority to monarchy than to people's multi-party democracy. They have moulded themselves unto capitalist outlook. They have taken the basic principles of Marxism

⁹³ *The Rising Nepal*, (Kathmandu), November 30, 1994

⁹⁴ *Deshantar Weekly*, (Kathmandu), March 26, 1995

simply as dogmatic thinking."⁹⁵

As the public faith against the UML government began to wane, the CPN-UML party called an explanation to the government. In one of the explanation calls, Deputy Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal clarified to the workers of the party that

"We have expressed our loyalty towards the palace not because of our interest but because of our compulsion. We were constrained to join our hands with the palace so that we can maintain power-balance against the alliance of the Nepali Congress and the National Democratic Party. As a result of this power balance, we gave political appointment to certain persons like Narendra Bikram Shah, Bal Mukunda Dev Pandey, Parsu Ram Kharel etc.."⁹⁶

Threat to Palace and Call for Mid Term Elections

The six months' period was about to end. The Nepali Congress and the National Democratic Party were on the move to withdraw their support to the UML government. The UML government was on the watch that the palace also might support the opposition forces. As it saw some impending danger from the palace, it began to threaten the palace in one or the other way. As a first move, Prime Minister Adhikari uttered in an interview to AFP correspondent that "the monarchy is needed for some time to come."⁹⁷ Within a few days, the interview was corrected as "the monarchy is needed for times to come"⁹⁸ by deleting the word 'some' from the interview. In spite of such correction, the implication did not change. Similarly a prominent worker of the UML, Lok Krishna Bhattarai, the then general manager of Nepal Oil Corporation, gave an interview making allegation to the Queen that "During Panchayat period, the corporation was made to submit one hundred twenty million rupees to the Queen per year."⁹⁹ Immediately after that interview, Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari and Minister Chandra Prakash Mainali pressurised Bhattarai to contradict this statement which Bhattarai declined to obey. As a result, his service was terminated. To quote the *Nepali Patra*

"... as this interview was about to affect the relation between the UML government and the palace, Mr. Bhattarai is said to have been removed (from his post). However, in the termination letter handed over to Mr. Bhattarai, the government did not mention about the cause while it thanked him for the services rendered by him up till then."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ *Jana Astha Weekly*, (Kathmandu), May 3, 1995

⁹⁶ *Punarjagaran Weekly*, (Kathmandu), January 17, 1995

⁹⁷ *Vimarsha Weekly*, (Kathmandu), May 26, 1995

⁹⁸ *Ibid*

⁹⁹ *Jana Astha Weekly*, (Kathmandu), May 17, 1995

¹⁰⁰ *Nepali Patra Weekly*, (Kathmandu), May 19, 1995

The political scenario took a new turn on 8th June, 1995 when 70 members of the House of Representatives representing the Nepali Congress submitted a petition to the King requesting him to summon the special session of the House of Representatives. They had submitted the petition with a view to move no-confidence motion against the CPN-UML government headed by Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari. In connection with this petition, King Birendra summoned the special session of the House of Representatives on 16th June, 1995 in accordance with the provision of the 1990 Constitution. To quote the notice of His Majesty's Principal Press Secretariat "His Majesty the King convened the session in response to a submission made by 70 members of the House of Representatives requesting His Majesty to convene the session in accordance with Article 53(3) of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal- 1990."¹⁰¹

The CPN-UML government was aware of its weak position in the House of Representatives. It did not have the courage and strength to face no-confidence motion in the house. So the government also recommended the King to dissolve the very House and also to fix the date of mid-term elections. The government made this recommendation immediately after it came to know of the submission made by 70 members of the House of Representatives on June 9, 1995. The plan of the government did not succeed immediately. The King began hectic consultations with various dignitaries from diverse walks of Nepal's national life. The 103 members of the House of Representatives, at this time, had "registered a no-confidence motion to be tabled at the special session of parliament summoned by His Majesty on 16 June."¹⁰² The outlook of the palace made the CPN-UML government to be worried much more. So it began to make forceful threat to the King in order to bring the result in its own favour. The words of *Deshantar Saptahik* in this context run as:-

"It is not a matter to be hidden how the prominent left force CPN-UML threatened the King from 9th to 13th June. It cannot be said whether the King was cowed down or not. But every effort or attempt was perpetrated by the CPN-UML to frighten (the King). Within these days, the CPN-UML published that they would launch valley strike (bandh) for 15 days --It used these threatening words in case the king did not announce mid-term polls. From Radio Nepal, it was broadcast that the CPN-UML knows nothing more than the people's verdict. If some one stops us going in the midst of the people, the CPN-UML will counter against such a move. It was almost clear that the UML would have run to attack the Narayanhiti palace too if the King had not announced the mid-term elections."¹⁰³

The opposition leader Sher Bahadur Deuwa also expresses a very

101 *The Rising Nepal*, (Kathmandu), June 10, 1995

102 *The Rising Nepal*, (Kathmandu), June 14, 1995

103 *Deshantar Weekly*, (Kathmandu), June 18, 1995

similar view while giving interview to the *Nepali Patra* and the view of Deuwa is:-

"Perhaps you might have listened to the Ghatna and Vichar (Events and Views) programme two days before the dissolution of the House of Representatives by the King. In this programme, the president of Akhil (ALL Nepal Student's Organisation) had expressed that if the King did not recommend for a mid-term or if the king's decision does not come in our favour, we will make the King flee from the country. That day, I myself had listened the programme. He had expressed that if the mid-term polls are stopped, we will use any kind of strength to drive out the King from the country and we will struggle and fight to make the country a republic."¹⁰⁴

The threat of the UML government worked miracle. King Birendra dissolved the House of Representatives on June 13, 1995 and fixed 23rd November, 1995 as the date for mid-term elections.

Reactions against House Dissolution

The dissolution of the House of Representatives by King Birendra was taken as a surprise in the political sphere. There was no one to expect for such a result. The special session of the House of Representatives had already been summoned. A move for no-confidence motion had also been registered. The majority of members of the House of Representatives had claimed authority to form a solid, strong and stable government of their own. Moreover, the King was advised by majority of the political leaders not to initiate step for mid-term polls. In spite of all these factors, the House of Representatives was dissolved. That is why it was not unnatural that the people, specially the political leaders, would express the words of resentment towards the palace at such a time.

Immediately after the dissolution of the house, the political leaders, specially of the opposition group, began to express words of resentment towards the palace. The speaker of the House of Representatives, Ram Chandra Paudyal, took this move of King Birendra as a great tragedy to the nation and expressed that "His Majesty made so much of consultations (with the dignitaries) and in these consultations, almost all of them had suggested the King not to resort to mid-term polls. If the King were to announce this dissolution, why should he make such consultations."¹⁰⁵

The opposition leader Sher Bahadur Deuwa also expressed a very similar view with the words:-

"The King was not compelled to agree with the prime minister who, inspired by party interests, had made recommendations to dissolve parliament and hold mid-term polls. This step was sure to paralyse

¹⁰⁴ *Nepali Patra Weekly*, (Kathmandu), June 23, 1995

¹⁰⁵ *Vimarsha Weekly*, (Kathmandu), June 16, 1995

the country's economy, and the people had not wanted such a move too. It was a matter but of surprise and regret that the King took such a move when he was not constrained to do so by the constitution and when the vote of no confidence proposal had already been presented in the house. The prime minister's recommendation was wrong no doubt. At least, the King should have taken constitutional course to make the government face the proposal (of vote of no-confidence) in the house. Even the King did not pursue the constitutional provisions regarding vote of no-confidence."¹⁰⁶

Similarly, in an interview, Deuwa again expressed:-

"If the King had not consented the recommendation at this time, he would have become very much popular among the people. The entire people at this time wanted no mid-term polls. And the people had not expected that the King would make such a move. Even the Nepalese economy was not in a position to bear this burden. There cannot be two opinions that the King missed the opportunity to become very much popular. It would be a tragedy if the King had announced mid-terms only by being deterred by the UML. What greater tragedy than this would have been to the country if the King is deterred with a single party. If the King had saved the nation from the abyss of mid-terms, we would have created public opinion in favour of the King by organising grand rallies. We would have countered with the forces opposed to the King. The King had nothing to do in this regard."¹⁰⁷

He, furthermore, added:-

"The King is bound to summon special session if 52 parliamentary members ask for the same. But not taking note of this binding provision, the King consented to the unbinding provision.... Another fact is that the duty of the UML government was to face vote of no-confidence. But it did not make any venture in this direction, say, it could not make a show of democratic character. And the King's duty was also to emphasize on the UML government to face vote of no-confidence. But this was not done."¹⁰⁸

The other prominent figure who made vehement attack against the palace was Mahendra Narayan Nidhi, Secretary General of the Nepali Congress. Expressing the words of resentment towards the palace, Nidhi recounted the former event of house dissolution and said that

"We had opposed even our own party for recommending dissolution of the House of Representatives. We had submitted petition even to the King and filed cases in the court. During that time, we were

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁷ *Nepali Patra Weekly*, (Kathmandu), June 22, 1995

¹⁰⁸ *Jana Bhabana Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 3, 1995

given justice neither by the palace nor by the court. Now the same example is being repeated during the UML (government)'s time. It is not necessary that the past mistake be repeated."¹⁰⁹

He added by saying that

"If the King is not in a position to properly utilise the provisions of the constitution, why should we maintain the monarchy (King)? Monarchy was needed for protecting the constitution but the King remained ineffective in this direction.... The King should have asked us before dissolving the parliament. But he did not ask and the constitution was not utilised properly. The King should have given justice. There was enough ground for giving justice while the dissolution of the parliament had been recommended.... This time, we had made a show of majority too. At least, the government of the majority should have been formed If the King remains ineffective to give proper decision even at such a juncture, what is the use of such an institution. The King (monarchy) should be removed (abolished). We should not maintain it any more. Why to retain it by allocating so much of funds....We had submitted the proposal for vote of no-confidence by asking time with the King. The King also fixed the date for moving such a proposal. Is it his duty that he should dissolve parliament without completing even this task? There had been certain rights even within the parameter of constitutional monarchy. And, that is why, monarchy is being maintained. Is he the King without any role to play? If there is no role to play, what is the use of such a King?"¹¹⁰

Again, in an another interview, he expressed a similar view with the words:-

"We have maintained constitutional monarchy for the protection of national unity and national sovereignty. Otherwise, what is the need of maintaining monarchy. After the (Supreme Court's) decision we have had to reconsider about the constitution. ... In a democratic country, the people are above the constitution. The sovereign people, if they wish, can throw away this constitution, burn it or make an another constitution."¹¹¹

Taking into account all these facts the National Democratic Party, the political party of the panchayat workers affiliated also with the palace, discussed on the strategy pursued on by the palace for restoring its lost authority. by discussing in this way, it analysed how such a trend would lead the country towards republicanism. To quote the *Saptahik Matribhumi*

"It is understood that at a meeting held on last Sunday, the central

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Nepali Patra Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 14, 1995

¹¹¹ *Jana Astha Weekly*, (Kathmandu), August 23, 1995

committee of the National Democratic Party analysed on the attitude of the palace and the UML. The meeting of the National Democratic Party discussed how an intrigue is being hatched for restoring the sovereign power which the people had won in the year 2046 V.E. (1990). The meeting also analysed that if someone makes a demand for republicanism in the political situation of today, there would be no force that can resist such a demand."¹¹²

Palace in Eroding Position

After the dissolution of House of Representatives, the palace had have to suffer a great set-back. The ball of Nepalese politics reached from the palace to the Supreme Court. The leaders of the opposition parties,— the Nepali Congress and the National Democratic Party,— had filed writ petitions in the Supreme Court challenging the validity of dissolution of the House of Representatives. The people, the political leaders specially, took the Supreme Court as the final authority to safeguard the constitution in lieu of the palace and waited for the verdict. In this way, the situation of the reactionary elements, which tried to mobilise the palace for their own selfish ends, began to shake to a large extent. To quote Pampha Bhusal, secretary general of the United People's Front

"... it is to be admitted that the reactionary state-power at this moment has been in grave crisis. It has almost been in rotten stage. And the result is that two elections are being conducted here within one year. The problems of the people and the nation are in critical state. The reactionary force has been facing crisis. Despite its efforts to maintain itself by all means, it has begun to shake. This clarifies how the path to people's revolution is in the offing?"¹¹³

Even at such a juncture, the UML government was in no mood to extend its support to the palace. When the UML government felt that the palace might play some other mischief or intrigue, the UML Deputy Secretary General, Bam Dev Gautam, threatened the palace with the words: "In case of need, we will bury the Nepali Congress, the National Democratic Party and the King into one grave."¹¹⁴ And similarly Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari also spoke in a very clear but in hushed tone that "Undoubtedly, there is no place for monarchy in Marxism and Leninism. But Communism has become successful wherever it adjusted itself with time and circumstances."¹¹⁵

¹¹² *Matribhumi Weekly*, (Kathmandu), August 8, 1995

¹¹³ *Nepali Patra Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 14, 1995

¹¹⁴ *Jana Bhabana Weekly*, (Kathmandu), July 3, 1995

¹¹⁵ *Vimarsha Weekly*, (Kathmandu), June 30, 1995

Historic Decision of Supreme Court

The ball of Nepalese politics was utilised by the Supreme Court very excellently. On August 28, 1995, the special bench of the Supreme Court, by a majority of eight against three, gave the verdict that the recommendation of Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari to dissolve the House of Representatives is unconstitutional and, therefore, void. Upholding supremacy of the parliament and giving a precedent setting and far reaching judgement, it also laid down that if such a trend is evoked without proper regard to the voice of people's representatives, "it could derail parliamentary democracy. We have the example of Germany where the right to dissolve parliament granted by the democratic Weimar constitution was abused repeatedly which ultimately gave rise to Nazism."¹¹⁶ According to this verdict "the right to dissolve parliament should be exercised judiciously and only after exhausting the possibility of an alternate government."¹¹⁷

This historic decision also dispelled the doubt by declaring that the acts initiated by the King on the recommendation of prime minister, council of ministers, any official or constitutional body under the present constitution fall under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. To quote Bijay Aryal

"The court has ruled that the responsibility for such acts will rest with those on whose recommendation the king has acted, not the king himself. From this interpretation it follows that the king will act according to the recommendation of others except in certain cases where the Constitution specifically provides that the king will do these things at his discretion. Thus the argument that because the final act of dissolution was formally done by the king, it could not be subject to be challenged in a court of law, has rightly been dismissed."¹¹⁸

Whatever may be the reactions for or against this decision, the Supreme Court's decision, for the first time in the political history of Nepal, tried to restrain Nepalese monarchy within the parameter of constitution. In the words of C.P. Mainali, the leader of minority group in the CPN-UML, "the decision of August 28 by Honourable Court has helped to evolve democracy by confining monarchy within the framework of constitution. Previously, monarchy, in reality, had never been tied up by the constitution befitting people's movement."¹¹⁹

Similarly the words of Chief Justice Viswa Nath Upadhyaya in this context are that

"While framing the constitution, the constitutional role of His

¹¹⁶ *The Kathmandu Post*, (Kathmandu), August 29, 1995

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹¹⁸ Bijaya Aryal, "No Reason for Shedding Tears over the Court Verdict", *The Observer Weekly*, (Kathmandu), September 1, 1995

¹¹⁹ *Nepali Patra Bi-weekly*, (Kathmandu), September 5, 1995

Majesty had already been institutionalised. The interpretation given in connection with the decision has furthermore strengthened this role. The decision has helped to make His Majesty's role free of controversy. Everyone, having far sightedness, has understood this fact."¹²⁰

Controversial Role even after Historic Decision

The palace was looked upon with apprehensive eyes even after this historic decision. The reason behind it is that the King attempted again to encroach upon the provisions of constitution under the wrong advice of royal advisors. In pursuance with the Supreme Court's decision, the House of Representatives had already been reinstated. The reinstated house had voted out Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari and the government of CPN-UML from the office. By passing the vote of no-confidence resolution, the parliament had ousted the government headed by Premier Man Mohan Adhikari. But even at such a time, the palace, in lieu of relieving Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari from the office, extended his term until an another government was formed. On the other hand it delayed in appointing Sher Bahadur Deuwa as prime minister although the majority members of the lower house of parliament, i.e., House of Representatives had made a recommendation for it. Taking note of this encroaching activities of the palace, the *Punarjagaran Weekly* makes a comment:-

"His Majesty, who was interested to remain within the framework of constitutional monarchy and also been very careful in maintaining the letter and spirit of the constitution, was dragged again into controversy by his advisors by furnishing him wrong advice. The new controversy has arisen in the context of Prime Minister Adhikari's resignation. According to Article 36.5 (b) of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, His Majesty had have to relieve the Prime Minister from his post as and when the House of Representatives convened in accordance with Article 53 (3) passes a no-confidence motion against him in pursuance with Article 59 (3). But in lieu of relieving him from his post, His Majesty, in accordance with the Sub Clause 7 of the same, has asked the Prime Minister to continue in office until a new Council of Ministers is formed. This has been quite contradictory to the spirit of the constitution."¹²¹

Similarly, the commentary made by the *Rastapukar Weekly* runs as:-

"It has been further confirmed two days back that an active gang, which defamed monarchy by wrongly advising the King to dissolve

¹²⁰ *Punarjagaran Weekly*, (Kathmandu), September 26, 1995

¹²¹ *Ibid*

the House of Representatives, is active in the palace up till now. At the time when the parliament had ousted Man Mohan Adhikari from the post of prime minister, the King, an organ of the parliament, released a news on the acceptance of the prime minister's resignation. While releasing the news it did not take into account that the prime minister has been voted out from his office automatically. Similarly the leader, who previously had proved his majority, was again asked to submit the signature of majority and only then was given appointment and administered oath of office only twenty four hours afterwards the appointment."¹²²

Concluding Remarks

The palace is being apprehended as the undemocratic political institution even after the re-establishment of democracy in 1990. The manifold strategies perpetrated by it, within these years, for restoring the lost authority have succumbed to failures. Time and again, the people, specially the political leaders and journalists, have outpoured indignant voices or words of resentment towards this institution because of its reactionary activities. The historic decision given by the Supreme Court on 28th August, 1995 has tried to confine the palace activities within the framework of constitutional provisions.

Thus, the palace has learnt a lot of lessons after the re-establishment of democracy in Nepal. If the palace fails to take into consideration all these lessons, it will have to meet an unfavourable situation.



THE AFTERMATH

Deteriorating Situation

The re-established democracy has completed nine years of its life-span. The constitution promulgated after the re-establishment of democracy has transformed the status of Nepalese people from subjects to citizens investing unto them the sovereign authority of the nation. Despite such investment, no improvement could be seen in the life of Nepalese people. Rather it seemed to worsen day by day. The reason behind it is that almost all the political leaders, who came to power after the re-establishment of democracy, succumbed to servile mentality in order to attain their own selfish interests. They forgot to heed the welfare of Nepalese people. And, thus, the life-span of nine years proved failure in consolidating the multi-party democracy.

Ever since its re-establishment, the multi-party democracy has faced a grave set-back. Each and every government formed after the election results tried to consolidate their own position and authority. Without caring for the public welfare, they began to encroach and interfere upon every department of national life. The encroachment and interference did not remain limited within national politics and civil administration. Even the departments of education, economy, police and justice did not remain aloof from such encroachment and interference. The result was that political norms and democratic values were thwarted everywhere. The Nepalese politics began to whirl around a limited circle. Opportunism and corruption became rampant at every department of national life. Nepotism and favoritism became the order of the day. Thus the multi-party system could not create a favourable atmosphere either for developing the country or for consolidating the multi-party system. As regards the unfavourable atmosphere created by multi-party democracy, the words of Regmi are:-

"Today, the senior judges of the Supreme Court lecture on the dark aspects of justice sector, the chief of the Commission for Controlling the Abuse of Authorities talks on the inadequacy of atmosphere for carrying on its duties and the Chief of the Election Commission commits his inability to conduct election in the present situation of stagnation. If important constitutional bodies like these are constrained to face such situations, there is nothing to talk about other administrative and corporate bodies."¹²³

The new trend in Nepalese politics dragged the nation into the abyss of obscurity. The intra-rivalry attitude existing between different political parties added extra impetus to this deteriorating trend. Not a single political leader or party was found there to save the country from such anomalies or

deteriorating trend. Moreover, the dearth of far-sightedness, tolerance and harmony among all the prominent political leaders cast a dark shadow over Nepalese politics. The people, specially the top ranking leaders, began to falter. They tried to capture power or earn abundant wealth by perpetrating each and every kind of unscrupulous means. There was none to check such a trend. That is why, a question mark is being raised even on the efficacy of multi-party system, parliament and government. In regard to this deteriorating trend, Dr. Sundar Mani Dikshit in an interview expresses:-

"Lo, the so-called leaders who could not afford even for a slipper yesterday are riding on Pajeros and making huge bungalows by inflicting taxes upon the people. They are the only people who got fostered in this multi-party system. Nothing is being done for the poor people. Today, family rule is being practised in the name of democracy. The concept of people's welfare is being thwarted. ... This multi-party system is not suited for the country. Those who enjoy life by looting cannot think of its alternative."¹²⁴

The governments formed under the new system did nothing to maintain or strengthen the existing infrastructure of national economy or development activities. In lieu of creating new infrastructures in these spheres, the new governments, the government led by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala specially, sold some of the existing industries at base value. While doing so, the names of liberalisation and privatisation were utilized as the national policy. The original concepts of national development were shattered in this way. The national economy began to dwindle. The government could not mobilize even the natural resources and technical skills of the nation by utilizing massive people's participation. The country began to rely heavily on foreign donations and foreign loans. Thus, Nepal began to face a grave crisis in the economic front. As regards the dwindling position of national economy, the words expressed by Centre for Civic Awareness and Social Studies run as:-

"The economic situation of the nation is passing through a critical and grave state. Dearness and unemployment have emerged as a serious threat to the nation. The Nepalese people are gripped by the clutches of price hike, unemployment and insecurity. Ever since the establishment of multi-party democracy, or say, within nine years of its life-span, the load of foreign loan has risen to an unanticipated level. Besides that, Nepal has superseded even Bhutan while incorporating herself in the list of poorest nations of the world"¹²⁵

Maoist Activities

The Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) took the deteriorating situation of the country as the best period for launching its movement. Under

¹²⁴ *Janadesh Weekly*, (Kathmandu), March 30, 1999.

¹²⁵ *Abdharana and Karyakram*, (Kathmandu: Centre for Civic Awareness and Social Studies, 2055), p. 3 system.

the name of people's war, the party raised its head against the government and the new political system. It began to spread anarchy at different districts of the country by perpetrating terrorism. As a result, the government could not conduct the local elections in these districts. As regards the government's failure in conducting local elections, the *Kantipur* writes:-

"Because of the people's war launched by the Maoists, the local elections in nineteen districts of the country were not conducted. The result was that all the development activities remained stand-still and the budget allocated for development works could not be utilised. Jumla, Dang, Pyuthan, Rukum, Salyan, Rolpa and Bardia are certain districts which includes among them."¹²⁶

The government launched police action in these districts under the name of Sera-2 Operation but the action, too, proved futile. Under the Maoist activities, not merely the innocent people but the police personnels also were found to be victimized. The death toll brought about by the Maoist led people's war may be summed as:- "The violence perpetrated in the name of people's war since 1st Fagun, 2052 has taken the life of 611 Nepalese citizens up till now. Among them, 468 people have been killed by the police. About 100 Nepali Congress workers and 35 police have lost their lives because of the Maoist terrorism."¹²⁷ The political atmosphere, in this way, grew from bad to worse. Because of such insecure position, the Election Commission was compelled to declare the forthcoming general election in two phases. It was such a situation when the Nepalese people were utterly disgusted and were constrained to think for an alternative.

Against such backdrop, the people led by pro-panchayat leaders or forces close to the palace raised the voice against the government and multi-party system at certain quarters of the country. They asked the King to appear in the forefront for saving the country from anarchy, anomalies and deterioration. It was a time favourable for King Birendra, both at home and abroad, for initiating action towards recovering his lost power. India, Nepal's giant neighbour in the south, was being ruled by a Hindu nationalist government under Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. It was a government quite favourable for the King and the country, for the King because of his projection as the greatest Hindu leader and for the country because of her being the only Hindu state in the world. Moreover, the Nepalese people were also willing to co-operate with the King because of the country's deteriorating situation. To add to it, the King's role as the constitutional monarch also had paid a lot to win the people's sympathy. While responding to a question "what would you propose as the solution to the present (deteriorating) condition of the country", even the former Minister Jagannath Acharya implicitly expresses his support towards the King's dynamic step. Acharya's words in this context are:-

¹²⁶ *Kantipur*, (Kathmandu), February 8, 1998.

¹²⁷ *Punarjagaran Weekly*, (Kathmandu), January 19, 1999.

"The first solution is to form a government by adopting a violent means; the other is that the King should initiate very bold step in order to give new direction; and the third is to secure people's verdict peacefully. There is no fourth alternative besides them. As regards the King's bold step, we cannot give any pressure to the King in this context. ... The King should first agree on the point that now the time has come when I should make a jumping and it would not be difficult for me to handle the matter. Only at such a time, the question of helping the King arises. It is the pan and not the handle that should be heated first..."¹²⁸

Likewise, the Centre for Civic Awareness and Social Studies, in its *Concepts and Programmes* highlights on the King role as a true constitutional monarch with the words:-

"The Nepalese people and the international forums (*samuha*) have heartily commended the King for creating a record as the true constitutional monarch and for maintaining its values very sincerely. On the other hand, the character and behaviour of the political leaders seem to transgress constitutional values time and again. As a consequence, the national problem is being heightened because of the contradiction appearing between value oriented constitutional monarch and intemperate politics."¹²⁹

Taking all the factors in view, the reactionary and undemocratic forces affiliated to the palace tried to instigate the King for imposing coup in order to recover his lost power. At the signal of these forces, meetings and processions were organised at different districts of the country requesting the King to play an active role. An event of Gorkha district may be cited here in this connection. On 31st October, 1998, the Rastravadi Samuha, Gorkha (National Group of Gorkha), organised a public meeting at Gorakha Bazar. In the meeting, the *Samuha* emphasized for an active role of the King expressing words like:-

"After the introduction of democracy, the people are being forced to suffer from price-rise, corruption, oppression, terrorism and other problems. Leaders and ministers are utilising democracy as a means for accumulating black money. As such, the active leadership of the King has become indispensable."¹³⁰

Similarly, processions were organised at Nepalganj and Birganj asking the King to come to the forefront for saving the nation. The Nepalese people, in lieu of expressing resentment for such a move, kept themselves mum. Thus, they expressed their displeasure towards the political leaders and the multi-party democracy, too, because of their failure to launch programmes

¹²⁸ *Samakalin Weekly*, January 14, 1999.

¹²⁹ Abdharana, f.n. No. 2, p. 6.

¹³⁰ *Ghatma ra Vichar* (Kathmandu), November 4, 1998.

for delivering them from day to day trifles. It was such a juncture when the reactionary and undemocratic forces had expected that the King would exploit this opportunity by undertaking some concrete step so that he might restore his lost power. At this time, the political leaders too had worn an alarming posture because of such an atmosphere. As regards the probability of a coup to be staged by the King, the *Sandhya Time* writes:-

"It is being learnt from a reliable source that the palace, since a long time, is doing home-work for playing an active role again. The palace has almost taken a last decision in this context. The palace had prepared itself to undertake such a step on last Thursday, i.e., 12th instant (November 1, 1998). But because of certain technical difficulties, such a step was not undertaken. According this source, the step which was not undertaken two days back could be initiated anytime in future."¹³¹

Similarly, Saurav too traces a picture of such an event which could have been undertaken in the past. To quote Saurav

"There could be a *coup de tat* anytime, this is what Nirmal Lama had expressed in a Weekly. The present King's magnificent personality saved (the country) from bloodshed, these are the words uttered by Ram Chandra Paudyal. We got to read it somewhere. The coup would have been imposed had the King not been constrained to leave for London, it is one of the rumours circulated in a room which we got to listen. All of us have seen the ghosts of Panchayat rising on 1st Paukha as if they were the re-emanations of Karmavir Mahamandal of 2017 (1960). Certainly, a coup would have been imposed. We the people are compelled to take it as true. Now let us speculate what would have been happened if a coup had certainly been imposed. The dungeons will be filled up by the leaders. The houses of all important personnels will be searched and researched. A curfew will be imposed. The secretaries of different ministries will rule the country. The military will make a plan to counter or eliminate the Maoists. The military would be able to carry out this plan within one month. ... The King would then find himself in the position of Nizam of Hyderabad or Hari Singh of Kashmir...."¹³²

Likewise the *Jana Ekta* traces the version of present Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and former Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai in this context with the words:-

"Inviting suddenly the journalists of the Nepali Congress merely at a meeting organised on last Saturday, both Koirala and Bhattarai expressed that the reactionary forces opposed to democracy are activating themselves to disrupt the upcoming election. According to

¹³¹ *Sandhya Times* (Kathmandu), November 3, 1998.

¹³² Saurav, "Nabhayeko Raktapat" *Deshantar Weekly* (Kathmandu), January 3, 1999.

a participant of the meeting, the Prime Minister was compelled to hint on this fact because he speculated that the palace might try to annul the election programme of Baishakh. He also expressed that the Prime Minister will declare election within fifteen days with the speculation that strategy might not be launched to bring changes in the constitution by disrupting elections to be held in Baishakh."¹³³

Despite such speculations from all the quarters, nothing wrong came to pass in the country. Everything began to go as usual. The political leaders as well as the people breathed the air of satisfaction. They felt gratitude towards the King for pursuing the role of a true monarch. With the passing of time, King Birendra has really earned maturity and excellence in performing his role as a constitutional monarch. That is why he is being commended from all quarters of the country.



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January 10, 1992
December 2, 1994
January 15, 1995
April 16, 1993
September 24, 1993
February 11, 1994
February 18, 1994
July 15, 1994
November 2, 1994
December 2, 1994
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April 24, 1990
April 27, 1990
August 24, 1990
November 7, 1992
November 30, 1994
June 10, 1995
June 14, 1995

EPILOGUE

Before concluding the book, the author expresses:-

1. apology for not being able to spill out words in favour of the palace and the palace people of Nepal,

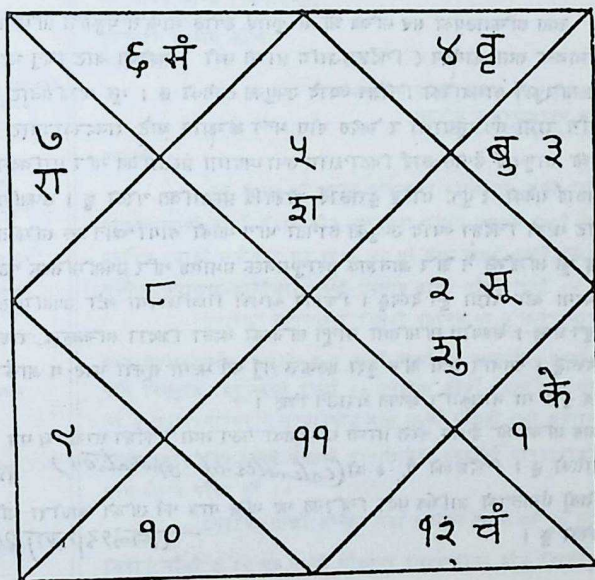
2. gratitude towards Dean Dr. Tri Ratna Manandhar and other staff of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, for granting permission to bring out publication of the thesis in a book-format and

3. regret for not waiting to make the book perfect as Tai Tung, the prominent historian of ancient China, had once done by expressing words like:- "Were I to await perfection, my books would never be written."



APPENDICES

श्री ५ महैन्द्रवीरविक्रम शाहदेवको जन्मलग्नकुण्डली



श्री विक्रम संवत् १९७७ सौरमानेन ज्येष्ठमासदिनगतेषु ३०॥
शुक्रवासरे ॥ आषाढमासे कृष्णपक्षे ॥ नवम्युपरि दशम्यान्तिथौ ॥
उत्तरभाद्रपदोपरि रेवती नक्षत्रे ॥ सूर्योदयाद् गतघटीषु १४।२२ तदा
सिंहलग्ने सिंहनवांशे ॥ श्री ५ महैन्द्रवीरविक्रम शाहदेव वर्मणा
जन्मे ॥

Chief Priest Padma Nabha Shastri's Letter to Principal Secretary

श्री मान प्रमुख सचिव ज्यू

प्रमुख-सचिवालय

राजदरबार

आदर्शनम महोदय

त्यस सचिवालयका सर सचिव श्री साधुभार्थ डंगोल मार्फत पशुपति समितिको गठन बारेको नामावडी तथा कार्यक्रम (निर्देशन) आदि प्राप्त भयो । महोदय बाट पिन भएको मूल समितिबाट गण्डुपर्ण कामबारेको निर्देशन ज्ञापन उपयुक्त लागेको छ । मूल समितिबाट गण्डुपर्ण कामको लागि राम्रो संग मूल्याकृत र सहित होस भन्ने आश्रय बाटै राजदरबारबाट आउने प्रतिनिधि श्री साधुभार्थ डंगोल ठार्व विद्यालय उपाध्यक्षमा प्रस्तावित गरि ताकिमा पनि दुई पटक पत्र पठाई सकेको र पुनः सोहि कुठाठाई दोहोर्ने प्रस्तावित गरेको छ । उपसमितिकारुपले महोदय बाट भएको निर्देशन ज्ञापन उपयुक्त लागेता पनि यसको कार्य निष्पन्न मूल समिति गठन भईसके पछि मूल समिति नै होर आवश्यक सहानुभावहस समावेश गरि उपसमितिको गठन गर्ने व्यवस्था भएमा बढो राम्रो हुने देखिन्छ । किनकि कामको निष्पत्तिमा बढी उपसमितिको पनि आवश्यक हुन सक्छ । सहयोग समितिमा कानून सचिवको कठोर शिवा सचिवलाई राख्नु बढी आवश्यक देखिन्छ । यावारे गए भई कुरा छलफल गर्नु पर्ने भएमा सूचना पार म आफ्नै उपस्थित भै आवश्यक कुरा मा जानकारी अलगत गराउने छिरे ।

सर सचिव श्री डंगोल हस्त प्राप्त समितिको गठन तथा निर्देशन सम्बन्ध पत्र पनि साथै संलग्न राखेको छ । निर्देशनको नं. ३ को (Calendar of operation) सम्बन्धमा यस समितिको संचालनको आर्थिक पदा निश्चित भए पछि मात्र गर्न सकिने बाबत पनि अनुरोध गरेको छ ।

राजदरबार, काठमाडौं

With courtesy from Chief Priest Padma Nabha Shastri,
Pashupati Nath Temple, Kathmandu.

द. नं. १८/०४२/०४३



धर्मोदय सभा

१५ श्री विश्व बौद्ध सम्मेलन

(स्थापित २४८७ बुद्ध सम्वत्)

बोन नं. १-१४७४१

बुद्धविहार, धुनुडीमण्डप,
पो. ब. नं. ६६३६०५३,
काठमाडौं ।

पत्र संख्या :

नेपाल.....२५।३।२०४३

अवस्था :

विष्णु मृगजलन्द महास्वामि
बोन नं. २-१४४२०

उपाध्यक्षार्थ :

छेषु कुम्भो सामा
बोन नं. ४-१३३४१

मणिहर्ष उद्योति कंठारार
बोन नं. २-११२६०

लोक दर्शन बय्याचार्य
बोन नं. २-२३००५

महास्वामि :

डा. बंसुराम शास्त्र

सचिव :

इन्दिरा रत्न शास्त्र

सह-सचिव :

लोक बहादुर शास्त्र

कोषाध्यक्ष :

ब्रह्म कुम्भ धेनु
बोन नं. २-११०५१

श्री यादव कान्त गिलवालज्यू,
सदस्य सचिव,
लुम्बिनी विकास कोण,
काठमाडौं ।

विषय:- पन्थी विश्व बौद्ध सम्मेलन नेपालमा हुने
तारिख र सम्पुधाउन बारे ।

महोदय,

सन् १९८४ को अष्टम महिनामा श्रीलंकामा भएको विश्व बाद्ध
मातृत्व संपर्को चौधौं विश्व बौद्ध सम्मेलनमा विश्व मातृत्व संपर्को नेपाल केन्द्र
धर्मोदय सभाको तर्फबाट सन् १९८६ मा हुने उक्त संपर्को पन्थी विश्व बाद्ध
सम्मेलन नेपालमा आयोजना गर्नको निमित्त आग्रह गरेको थियो ।-

उपरोक्त निमन्त्रणा दिनुको निमित्त श्री ५ महाराजाधिराज सरकार
बाट निगाहपूर्वक स्वीकृति बक्स भएको थियो ।- तत्कालिन प्रधान मन्त्रीज्यूबाट
पनि स्वीकृति दिनु भएको थियो ।- उपरोक्त चौधौं विश्व बाद्ध सम्मेलन
श्री ५ महाराजाधिराज सरकारबाट बक्स भएको संदेशको तथा सम्माननीय प्रधान
मन्त्रीज्यूबाट दिनु भएको संदेशको प्रतिनिधित्व तपाईंको जानकारीको लागि यी
साथ संलग्न गरेका छौं ।-

उपरोक्त पन्थी सम्मेलन गर्दा धर्मोदय समाले बरु दुई कुराको पनि
विचार गरेको छ ।- एक त यी मौकामा विश्वभरीका बौद्ध विद्वानयुवा बाद्ध
नेता तथा विशिष्ट व्यक्तित्वको जमघट हुने बेला छाप्री प्यारा राष्ट्रमायकाबाट
आवाहन गरि बक्तीको शान्तिप्रवर्तलाई मूल्य विषय बनाई एक दिने गोष्ठा गर्ने ।
बक्ती कुरा श्री ५ महाराज कुमार जानेन्द्र बीर विक्रम शाहदेव सरकारको बध्यदाता
मार्मरर लुम्बिनी विकास कोणको स्थापना र लुम्बिनीको विकासको नयाँ लहर
बास्को बेला नेपालको हायक्रम उत्सुक्ता तथा योजना भिनाउनको निमित्त संघार

क्रमश:-

भरीका बौद्ध विशिष्ट नेताहरूलाई लुम्बिनीको समेत दर्शन गराई सकभर प्रचार प्रसार गर्ने विचार पनि छ ।- हामीलाई लाग्छ यस कार्यक्रमको लागि त्यस कोषको ठूलो महत्त्व छ र धेरै सहयोगको आवश्यकता भएको धर्मोद्भय समा ठान्द छ ।- प्रग्रामको लागि छुट्टै कुरा गर्नु पर्ने हामीले विचार राखेका छौं ।-

लुम्बिनी विकास जस्ता पवित्र तथा महान उद्देश्यलाई मूरा गर्ने विश्वका सबै बौद्धहरू लालायित हुनु स्वाभाविकै हो ।- अबत फन श्री ५ अधिराज कुमार ज्ञानेन्द्र सरकारको समेत यस कार्यक्रमले नेतृत्व पाएकोले सबै बौद्धहरू खुसी र प्रोत्साहित छन् , - हामीलाई लाग्छ पन्ध्रौं विश्व बौद्ध सम्मेलन बस्न नेपाल आई लुम्बिनीमा आफ्नै गै हरे पछि यो उत्साहलाई ठूलो बल मिल्ने छ र धेरै जनाले सकभर मदद गर्नेछन् मनि हामी दृढ विश्वास छ ।- विश्व बौद्ध भातृत्व संघ आफैले पनि केही मदद गर्ने विचार राखेको छ ।- यस बारे बैकम्वाट उक्त संघको महासचिवले ता. २६ मई १९८६ मा लुम्बिनी विकासको प्रोजेक्ट मैनेजर श्री बंगे एल श्रेष्ठ लाई लेखेको पत्रको फोटो कपी एक पन्नि यसै साथ संलग्न गरेका छौं ।- खुटा मूल बनावटको निर्मात्र यू एस डलर १,४७,४६१।- त्यो मिति सम्म जम्मा गरिएको र पन्ध्रौं विश्व बौद्ध सम्मेलनको बेला लुम्बिनी विकास कोषलाई साँ राम्रै छुट्टान्तरण गर्ने कुरा पनि यस चिट्ठामा स्पष्ट छ ।-

विश्वबौद्ध सम्मेलन नेपालमा विश्वका सारा बौद्धहरूको हृदयमा नेपाल र लुम्बिनीको ठूलो छाप लाग्न सक्ने यस्तो महान उपलक्षमा बरू देशमाभए जस्तै हामी मुलुकमा पनि राष्ट्रध्यक्षा स्वयं श्री ५ महाराजाधिराज सरकारको बाहुलिवाट समुद्घाटन गराउन मौसुफ सरकारमा मिति

मा बिन्तिपत्र चढाएका थियौं ।

त्यस सम्मेलनको गरामा बढाउन विसर्जन समारोह श्री ५ अधिराज कुमार ज्ञानेन्द्र सरकारको बाहुलिवाट गराउन अत्यन्त उपयुक्त सम्पत्ती मौसुफ सरकारमा मिति

मा बिन्तिपत्र चढाएका थियौं ।- यो दुवै बिन्तिपत्रहरूको नक्कल तपाईंको जानकारीको लागि यसै साथ संलग्न छ ।- १९८४ मा चौधौं विश्व बौद्ध सम्मेलन कलम्बोमा हुन्दा श्रीलंकाका राष्ट्रध्यक्षा श्री जयवर्धनेले समुद्घाटन गर्नुको साथ प्रधान मन्त्री श्री प्रेमदासेले विसर्जन समारोहमा भाग लिनु भएको थियो ।-

रामेश :-

अधि सन् मा नेपालमा चतुर्थ विश्व बौद्ध सम्मेलन हुँदा पनि स्व. श्री ५ महेंद्र सरकारबाट समुद्धाटन भएको र किसर्जन समारोहमा तत्कालिन प्रधान मन्त्री श्री टंक प्रसाद आचार्यज्यूले भाग लिनु भएको थियो ।-

पन्ध्रौं विश्व बौद्ध सम्मेलन हुने महिना नवम्बर १९८६ मा नि सबै तहबाट निश्चित भै सकेको छ ।- तर ताराखकी लागि श्री ५ महाराजाधिराज सरकारको सुविधाको दिन तोक्ने भनि पर्खी रहेका छौं ।- यो ताराख तोक्ने मौसुफ सरकारबाट खबर नपाई औपचारिकताको रूपमा सबै केन्द्रहरू र पदाधिकारीहरूलाई नेपालबाट निमन्त्रणा-पत्र पठाउनु पर्ने आज सम्म पठाउन सकेका छैनौं ।- उक्त सघको नियमानुसार सम्मेलन हुने ६ महिना अघि यो निमन्त्रणा होष्ट कन्दो () ले

पठाउनु पर्छ ।- नवम्बरमा सम्मेलन गर्ने भए मई महिनामानै जानु पर्ने थियो ।- उपरोक्त कारणले गर्दा मई र जून महिना बित्ति जुलाईको दस दिन बित्ति सधैरै पनि निमन्त्रणा पठाउन नसकेकोले धर्मोदय समालाई अप्ठ्यारो र अर्जजलो महसूस भै रहेको छ धेरै ठाउँबाट कुन ताराख नवम्बरमा हुने भनि बरोबर सिधार्ने आउन्छ ।- जापानबाट त २।३ पटक टेलफोन समेत आई सकेको छ ।- के भन्नु के भन्नु जस्तो भै रहेको छ ।- अब पनि हाम्रोले औपचारिक निमन्त्रणा तुरन्त पठाउन नसके यो पन्ध्रौं विश्व बौद्ध सम्मेलन नेपालमा गराउने विषय एउटो छतबाट बाहिरजाला भन्ने डर भै रहेको छ ।

केही दिन अघि हालको प्रधान मन्त्री श्री मारचमान सिंह श्रेष्ठलाई यो कुरा लि पेटन जाँदा समुद्धाटनको विषय समेत वारे श्री ५ अधिराज कुमार शानेन्द्र सरकारको ज्ञाफमानै जाहिर गर्नु भन्ने राय पाई ।- सो बमोजिम केही दिन देखी मौसुफ सरकारको २ ठो सो कर्णेल ब्रक श विक्रम शाहसंग कुरा गर्दै आएकोमा यस वारे सबै कुरा लक्ष्य तपाईँलाई पत्र लेख्नु भनि भन्नु भए बमोजिम यो पत्र लेखी रहेका छौं ।-

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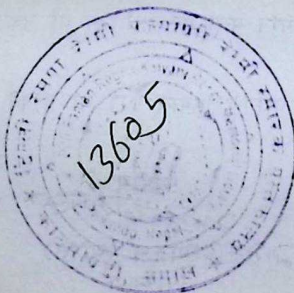
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